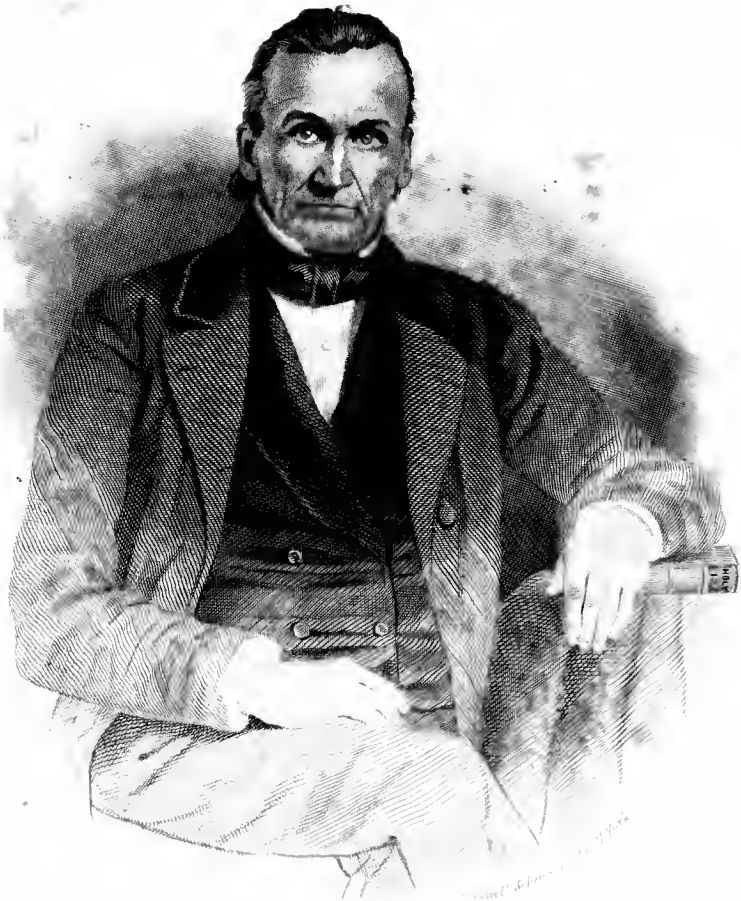

Yours fraternally
E. D. L. Potter

SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

DELIVERED ON

VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

IRA AMY POTTER,
OF THE GEORGIA CONFERENCE.

Nashville, Tenn.:
PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY J. B. M'FERRIN, AGENT.
1858.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858, by
IRA L. POTTER,
In the District Court of the United States for the Middle District of Tennessee.

STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY A. A. STITT, SOUTHERN METHODIST
PUBLISHING HOUSE, NASHVILLE, TENN.

Contents.

PREFACE v

SERMON I.—Sectarianism 11

II.—Predestination 23

III.—Calling and Election 37

IV.—The Good Fight 51

V.—Public Worship 65

VI.—The Trinity 79

VII.—On Faith 89

VIII.—On Sanctification 99

IX.—On Humility 111

X.—The Wedding Garment 121

XI.—The Lord's Supper 133

XII.—Godliness with Contentment 145

XIII.—On Prayer 157

XIV —God is no Respecter of Persons 171

XV —On Baptism 183

XVI.—The Love of the World 195

XVII.—The Cart Rope 207

XVIII.—The Devil 221

XIX.—Future Punishment 233

XX.—The Resurrection 245

XXI.—The Judgment 259

XXII.—The Reward of the Righteous 271

Preface.

SOME time in the fall of 1857, a friend of mine* requested me, in the presence of other gentlemen, to write a book of my sermons; the other gentlemen also joined in the request, and others added their solicitations, until a large number of my acquaintances, favoring the enterprise, had contributed one dollar each to enable me to carry it through the press. Whereupon I came to the conclusion, that as I had been a Methodist itinerant for many years, and done comparatively but little good, perhaps such a publication might do some good when I am no more. I send it forth, then, with the humble hope that it may, in some measure, supply my defect of usefulness. Such as it is, therefore, it is given to the public, without any long preface; and if it shall be of use to any immediate acquaintances, it is all that can be reasonably hoped for by the

AUTHOR.

---

*Dr. John G. Slappy, of Baker county, Georgia.

SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

SERMON I.

ON SECTARIANISM.

Sermons on Various Subjects.

SERMON I.

ON SECTARIANISM.

"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against."—Acts xxviii. 22.

The Apostle Paul, after a perilous voyage and a shipwreck at sea, had been safely landed at Rome a prisoner. After three days of rest, he sent for the chief men of the Jews; and when they came to his room, held a conference with them. But they professed entire ignorance of his coming, and said that they had received no letters from Judea concerning him; but the news of a new sect formed in their own country by Jesus of Nazareth having previously reached them, and knowing but little about it, except that it was everywhere spoken against, they made all haste to inquire of the apostle concerning it. Upon this inquiry he appointed a day when they might all come to his lodging; and many having assembled at the appointed time, he expounded to them the new religion "from morning till evening." The

effect was as might be expected: "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

Different religious sects, accompanied with more or less persecution, have existed in the family of man ever since the days of Cain and Abel; and in all those governments that would allow it, war and bloodshed have grown out of difference of opinion in religious matters. Though the gospel is a gospel of peace, it has been so perverted as to cause the death of millions of our race. The sect planted by our Saviour was no less violently opposed than other sects; for even in its infancy, ten successive emperors of Rome, having no other wars on hand, exerted all their energies to put down the Christian religion; and would certainly have succeeded, but for the divinity of its Author, who had said that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Christianity, therefore, stood the shock of ten regular persecutions from the emperors of Rome, for two hundred years. But early in the third century, Constantine became emperor of Rome, joined the Christian Church, and commenced a violent opposition to the Pagan religion, that had so long opposed itself to Christianity. He soon succeeded in putting it down—in demolishing its temples, and establishing Christianity throughout the Roman world. This brought all the dominions of that vast empire into one sect, and that the sect planted by the Saviour himself.

Doubtless Providence took this way to put down Paganism on the one hand, and to show us, on the other, what religion would come to in such a world as this, when there was but one sect. All the demagogues and office-seekers

joined the Church. The ministers being paid out of the imperial coffers, caused men of worldly ambition to press their way even into the sacred office. The work of corruption in the Christian Church thus commenced, and steadily progressed, step by step, with no opposing sect to check its onward way. But it was not until the year 606 that the Churches planted by the apostles became so corrupt as to declare the Bishop of Rome universal Bishop; and he and his successors have reigned as Popes of Romé from that day till this. And now we see what the Churches planted by the apostles came to when there was but one great mammoth Church, with none to oppose it. And as human nature is the same in all ages, we are bound to believe that if all the Christians belonged to the same sect at this day, the same result would follow; and the dark ages, as they are called, would but be experienced over again.

But in the memorable fifteenth century of the Christian era, a reformation commenced in Germany under Martin Luther; which was the first to succeed, though many attempts had been previously made. When Luther first made his stand against the Pope, Charles V was busily engaged in wars, and had confidence that the Pope would attend to his interests. The Pope seemed for a time to think the little monk unworthy of his notice; so that Luther's cause took such root as at last to defy the authority of the Pope. Other less daring spirits, seeing his successful opposition, were emboldened to come out against the Pope also; and thus the foundation of Protestantism was laid.

But now the question arises, Shall the Protestant world all

belong to one sect? (For we suppose the hand of God was in the Reformation.) We answer, It shall not; for we have already seen the results that would follow such a union. Therefore let the Protestant ranks be divided, that as sects they may watch over one another with vigilance; and may guard the Sacred Scriptures one against another, and save them from the corruptions that have been attached to them by Romanism. Let them be divided in numbers, so as to prevent men of worldly ambition from becoming aspirants for the sacred office. Such a division, at the same time, furnishes those sects with the opportunity of showing their charity one for another; for it is no charity for a man to love his own sect. Christ says, Matt. v. 47: "And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" But when we feel a charity for other sects, and show that charity by our outward conduct—as, for instance, communing with them—we exhibit to the world what we would never show if we all belonged to one sect. But at the same time, let those sects be formed upon points of small importance, and let their differences be such as that religion can flourish in each of them. This we believe to be really the case; and in view of the history of the past which we have just glanced at, I am prepared to feel as well as say, Thank God for the different sects of the Protestant world!

It is the opinion of some among us, however, that all Christians will finally make but one sect; and it is not surprising that each one who thinks thus, fancies that his own denomination will be that sect. This opinion is founded

on the prayer of our Saviour—John xvii. 11—that they might all be one; and further confirmed by Eph. iv. 13, where the apostle prayed for "the unity of the faith." But this is all a vain conceit, and a misconstruction of the passages; for the different sects have a direct tendency to promote humility, which is the only way to heaven, and to keep down popularity and pride—the high road to corruption. Moreover, all the Christians in the different sects are already one in feeling, in motive, and in end; and are surrounded with better safeguards to their future prospects than they would be if all were in one mammoth Church. Suppose, for instance, all the people in the United States were in the Methodist Church: I guess it would not take half as long to corrupt that Church, as it took Constantine and his followers to corrupt the apostolic Churches. Suppose they were all in the Baptist Church. How many versions of the Bible would we have in the next hundred years? Then I thank God for the sects. And I thank God, too, that they are divided on points of small importance, such as the mode of baptism, singing of psalms, this and that particular way of understanding predestination, this and that notion of the foreknowledge of God; while at the same time they hold the doctrine of human depravity, of atonement by Christ, of repentance and faith and holy obedience, in order that we may be saved.

I firmly believe that the different sects are providential; nor can I be persuaded that a sect could be gotten up, spread abroad, and exist and flourish for any great length of time, without Divine support. But it may be asked, Did not

Mohammedanism get up, spread abroad, and long exist, and can that religion be right? In reply, let me first premise that when any sects flourish under Divine support, it is no proof that they are right in every thing; for it may be that they displace that which is worse than themselves. This is precisely true of Mohammedanism, for it displaced idolatry in the countries over which it spread; and idolatry is the worst of sins. But why did not the Ottomans overrun Europe? For it was the opinion of the best statesmen of Europe that they were at that time able to conquer them. If they had done so, and overrun Europe, they would evidently have displaced Christianity, and put that which is infinitely worse in its place; and we should now be quarrelling about the fashion of a turban, instead of the amount of water necessary to baptism. But God evidently prevented their overrunning Europe; for just at that time Tamerlane of the Tartars came against the Ottomans, fought a pitched battle with Bajazet, in which he conquered him, and so crippled the Ottoman empire, that they have never been able to conquer Europe from that day till this. And Tamerlane seems to have had no end in view in doing this. He never acquired any of the Ottoman territory, or had any ambition of that sort. Now we think that God overruled this affair, to prevent Mohammedanism from spreading over countries whose religion was superior to it. This certainly accounts for the Divine support which this false religion received; for, however wrong in every thing else, it was right as to idolatry.

I repeat, that no sect can flourish for any length of time,

to the supplanting of other and better sects. Look at the repeated attempts made to raise sects out of the Methodist Church, and look at the repeated failures in those attempts. And I firmly believe that no sect will ever so prosper as to supplant the Methodist Church, until one rises up among them that is superior to them in God's own esteem; for "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Dan. iv. 17

With regard to the Methodist denomination, it was never the intention of John Wesley to form a separate sect; he was greatly opposed to it, as may be seen in his works. But out of the revival that he was instrumental in getting up, did arise the sect called Methodists, notwithstanding Wesley's opposition. If Wesley had withdrawn from the English Church, being angry with men for what he supposed to be their corruptions, and attempted to form a sect in opposition to them, as modern reformers from among the Methodists have done, God could not, and we think would not, have prospered him in his ambitious undertaking. But as he only intended to mend the morals of his Church, and to remain in it, he was free from the unholy ambition found among our modern reformers. If you will allow a comparison in this case, I will say: If John Wesley had fallen out with his mother because she had putrid sores of offensive smell, and had run off from home on this account, and gone peddling evil reports against his mother through the kingdom, he had never become the founder of a religious sect; for we think a desire to form a sect a sufficient guaranty of failure in the attempt.

If all ambitious sect-makers could be successful, doubtless the world would be fuller of sects than would answer a good purpose; but, fortunately for our world, God sits at the helm of affairs; and he puts down one and sets up another, according as one shall answer his purpose better than another. And moreover, when God puts one down, he does not do it with a sudden crash, as men would if they had it to do; but he lets it go down by slow degrees, to give the parties time to see their error, "as he is not willing that any should perish." If we are not mistaken, there are sects now among us gradually declining in the manner above described, and giving place to others more favorable to holiness, and less the apologists of sin than their predecessors. One thing is evident, that violent persecution, however strong the party engaged in it, has never yet been able to put down a religious sect. This fact alone might teach us that God manages the sects himself, and therefore they are providential, at least so far as the leading sects of the Protestant world are concerned.

From all that we have said it appears pretty clear that the religious sects, at least of this country, should exercise perfect charity towards each other; while at the same time each man should maintain the doctrines of the Bible as he understands them, plainly and fearlessly, though his notions of them may bear down hard on some of the favorite opinions of his hearers. This honest, plain dealing will never insult a man who has a proper sense of propriety. Nothing is more truly disgusting than to see a preacher bend what he conceives to be the truth of God, to suit the caprice of

his hearers, for the sake of popularity. Much more is that preacher disgusting who is afraid to preach his own doctrines on popular occasions. And worse still is the preacher who is not in favor of doctrinal sermons.

But it is one thing for a man to preach the doctrines which he honestly believes, and quite another thing to controvert other people's doctrines. But even controversy, when entered into by a man who is competent to the task, who has a proper sense of propriety, and is able to carry it on in a Christian spirit—as did John Fletcher of old—is important for the discovery and defence of the truth. But it is the fewest number that are thus able to manage controversy — that is, to bring up the doctrines of other Churches, and show the fallacy in them. Very few, as I said, can do this acceptably with God, and profitably for men; and because of this fact, thousands of violent disputants, in their attempts to do good, have really done harm.

And now, in conclusion, we say to all, let your only ambition with regard to supplanting other sects be, that you may excel them in opposition to sin, and in advocating holiness; and if God knows with regard to any sects that they, by supplanting others, will place that which is better in their stead, he will doubtless give them success. But if, on the other hand, they are striving for the mastery over others from worldly ambition, pride of opinion, or any other motive short of holiness, they are unworthy of success; and the sooner God puts them down, the better.

SERMON II.

ON PREDESTINATION.

SERMON II.

ON PREDESTINATION

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—ROM. viii. 29, 30.

PREDESTINATION is a doctrine plainly taught in the word of God, and therefore may be clearly understood and satisfactorily explained; for the word of God was certainly intended for man's comprehension and instruction; nor would this doctrine ever have appeared mysterious, but from the fact that so large a portion of the learned world has followed John Calvin's explanation of it; which explanation is certainly wrong, as we hope to show. John Calvin, it may be remembered, lived at the dawn of the Reformation—just at the time when Christianity was emerging from the dark ages; and it is certainly wrong for us to doom ourselves to the inferior light that shone on that day. We proceed, therefore, to understand this doctrine for ourselves, in strict accordance with the text before us.

I. Am I predestinated unto life? This is a question that all predestinarians propound to themselves with the deepest interest; and a question that never can be satisfactorily

answered under Calvin's theory. Hence originates the monstrous experiment of striving all our lives, without the least knowledge as to whether or not we belong to the favored party. But if we could be persuaded to drop John Calvin, and take the Apostle Paul for our expositor, and ask him the momentous question, he would give us a satisfactory answer in the language of our text: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." Now there is left us one more plain question to ask, which will be readily answered by every one: i. e., Whom did he foreknow? Lives there a being in the universe of God whom he did not foreknow? If not, and it is plain that he foreknew all, then he certainly predestinated all to the privileges found in the text. But one objects that the text means, whom he did foreknow as the elect; another, whom he did foreknow as penitent believers; a third, whom he did foreknow as persevering to the end; all of whom are equally engaged to pervert the text, and teach the apostle how to talk. These methods, however, of twisting the text out of its proper meaning, are of long standing, and would not be noticed here but for their age. The plain meaning of the text simply is, whom he did foreknow at all. We think the apostle, in this expression of the text, alludes to the calling of the Gentiles, who, together with the Jews, make up the whole of our race; and hence the broad expression, "whom he did foreknow." The ample provision of grace sincerely made for all, as everywhere found in the Scriptures, is sufficient proof of the correctness of this position. And why, under any other theory, should we have a Bible at all? To illustrate this point, we will suppose

that the Father made a gift to the Son; for Christ acknowledges a gift from his Father, in John vi. 37 Now if we can ascertain the extent of that gift, we shall go very far to explain this point of our text. Ps. ii. 8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Ps. lxxii. 8: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." John xiii. 3: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands." Matt. xi. 27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." John iii. 35: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." From these texts it clearly appears that the Father has given all to his Son. To this also corresponds the message sent by Christ in these words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is, offer life in my name to every creature. Now, should your father give you half his servants, you could not honestly send a message for them all to come home to you. But Christ sent for them all, therefore all were given him. Then, if all were given him, all were offered the privileges of the text; and as it is clear that no man can sin but against privilege, the neglect of these privileges constitutes a hell in comparison of which fire and brimstone seem a heaven.

From the foregoing we think we arrive safely at the conclusion that all were predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. It is obvious that the same number must run through every link in the chain of the text; and that it does we shall now proceed to show.

II. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." That all are called is a fact not disputed by any set of theologians that I know of; for God calls by his Spirit, which is said to be "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i. 9. He was also said to "reprove the world of sin." John xvi. 8.

We further conclude that there can be but one kind of call from God to man while in a state of probation. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that God has a different motive in calling one man from that which prompts him to call another; which is too absurd for refutation. God calls under the motive of mercy—without which he could take no notice of us—and his tender mercies are over all his works, much more over man. And although there may be many individual methods by which he calls, all being under the same motive, are but the same call, whether made by his Spirit, his word, his gospel, his mercies, or his judgments. Hence the notion of a common and an especial call of grace is simply ridiculous.

But that it is possible for man so to resist the call of God as to fall short of conformity to the image of Christ, is abundantly evident from Scripture. The Divine Spirit being the most efficient call, it is said of some: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Acts vii. 51. And the words of wisdom complain, Prov. i. 24: "I have called, and ye refused." So that it is awfully true, as our Saviour said, Matt. xxii. 14, "Many are called, but few chosen." It does not follow, therefore, because all are called, that all will be saved.

III. "Whom he called, them he also justified." The

great and cardinal doctrine of justification would require volumes to explain it in all its parts. We think, however, that it is only in one point of view that the doctrine is brought to our notice in this text, and that point of view is an exemption of our race from the guilt of Adam's sin. It is with reference to this point of view in justification that the apostle speaks in Rom. v. 18: "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." All men were justified, then, according to the apostle, in this particular sense. This is a view of justification abundantly supported by Scripture, and without which the fathers' sour grapes had set the children's teeth on edge, and the children must die for the fathers' sins; which is plainly contrary to the teachings of God's word. To discard this view of justification, is to place little children in a doubtful relation to their Maker, and involve the possibility of their destruction.

But, while it is true that all men are justified from the guilt of Adam's sin, it is equally true that all are totally depraved as the effect of it. This effect, however, is their misfortune, and not their fault, until in riper years they refuse to come to Christ for the cure of their nature's evil. It is under these circumstances alone that they are condemned. "For this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world." John iii. 19. We are therefore safe in concluding that all men were justified in this particular sense of the word; and this is, we think, the sense of the text.

IV "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." Upon

the meaning of the word glorified rests the whole solution of the text. We shall first inquire for the general meaning of the word. Its first and highest meaning is, beatific glory, or to be glorified in heaven. This meaning of the word may be found in Ps. lxxiii. 24: 2 Cor. iv. 17: 1 Pet. v. 10: John vii. 39. Every expositor that I have read, except Dr. Coke, has given the word glorified in this text this first and highest meaning. That they were therein mistaken we hope to be able to show, and will therefore proceed to inquire whether the word has not another and lower meaning. That it has is a fact admitted by most commentators. This lower meaning of the word is simply exalted privilege, high office, or station in life; and it even sometimes means in Scripture an exalted opinion of one's self, as in Rev. xviii. 7. Dr. Clarke gives a long list of texts, in his comment on the passage before us, where the word is taken in this lower sense. We shall therefore cite you to several texts in which beatific glory cannot be intended. Heb. v. 5: "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high-priest." To be a high-priest, then, was to be glorified. Isa. lx. 7; Rev. xviii. 7: 1 Pet. iv. 11; with many others that might be quoted. Now the question before us is, Which of all these meanings belongs to the text? We are willing that it should take the highest meaning, if, indeed, that is the true meaning of the text. We have no interests to serve or prejudice to gratify by confining it to a lower sense; and yet we have no doubt that the lower is the proper sense of the text. It simply means, as we think, the privilege of repentance unto life granted to the Gentile nations; which

privilege was a boon from Heaven of the greatest possible good. We will now proceed to substantiate this idea by the following arguments:

First. The word glorified cannot mean to be glorified in heaven from the tense of the text; for the imperfect tense being used, it would indicate that all that God ever predestinated should go to heaven had already got there when the apostle wrote. But the apostle himself had not yet arrived in heaven, and therefore was never predestinated to go there. But, on the other hand, the Gentile nations had already received the privileges of the gospel.

Secondly. The word glorified cannot mean the state of the blessed in heaven; because all the people so glorified were unsanctified; and whatever may be our differences of opinion chronologically with regard to sanctification—that is, whether we believe we are to be sanctified now, or at some future time, or just before or at death—still all hold that we must be sanctified somewhere between here and heaven; and all the labored efforts of learned men to bring sanctification into this text, are but so many efforts to subvert its meaning. The apostle, after all, knew what he was talking about.

But, thirdly, if the word means to be glorified in heaven, it proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. For it will prove, in spite of successful opposition, that all that God foreknew at all will get to heaven, which is universalism with a vengeance. And universalism is obliged to be wrong; because if it is right, nothing is wrong; nor would there be a Bible to tell us the right way to heaven if all were sure to get there. Therefore glorified must have a

meaning this side of heaven, and does certainly apply to the saving of the Gentiles, as above expressed.

Fourthly. If the word means to be glorified in heaven, it then proves too little in another sense, and therefore proves nothing; for it will prove that none but those who go to heaven were ever called at all; and even Calvin and Beza would allow the poor reprobates a common call. But if all that God ever called get to heaven, then it follows that none others were ever called at all; nor can it be possibly true that "many are called but few chosen;" nor can the Bible be sincere in complaining of their disobedience to the call. But the very fact that God calls at all, proves conclusively that he never intends to compel; and if he never compels obedience to his call, then it follows that some, by disobeying that call, may fall short of heaven, and so violate this perverted meaning of the text. We therefore think we arrive safely at the conclusion that the word glorified means the exalted privileges of the gospel granted to the Gentile nations, and to each individual of those nations whom God foreknew; nor can we suppose for a moment that he was ignorant of any one of them.

Fifthly. If the word glorified here means to be saved in heaven, then the text contradicts the plain sense of a great part of the Scriptures, and the best orators of the enlightened nations of Christendom have not been able, in three hundred years, to explain that view of the text so as to reconcile it satisfactorily with the Scriptures; although they have labored long and arduously to accomplish (to them) so desirable an end. For it is easily seen that the

same number runs through all the parts of this text, and it therefore follows that a certain number is infallibly to be saved; and if I am to choose between glorified in a lower sense, and a certain definite number that can neither be added to nor diminished from, I shall prefer the former; especially in the face of the arguments above, and the thousands of plain texts that seem to contradict the latter. Some of these texts may be properly alluded to here; such as, "He by the grace of God [not from any other motive] tasted death for every man." "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not." But, as every Bible reader knows, I might multiply these quotations to thousands. I will therefore forbear, and only add that this notion of a certain, definite number to be saved contradicts the whole moral code, inasmuch as it involves the absurd notion that God made a part of mankind for hell; which cannot be true, from the fact that every creature that God made is happy in the place he made it for; and of course if he made any man for hell, he could be happy nowhere else. And further, if it be true that a certain number is to be saved, and that number can neither be increased nor diminished, and if it be also true, as the advocates of that doctrine tell us, that the heathen cannot be saved without the gospel, they are certainly unwise in sending missionaries to them; for by keeping the gospel away from them, they would prevent the heathen from making a part of that definite number, and the result would be that their own children would

be compelled to embrace religion to prevent the number to be saved from being diminished. But it is useless to multiply arguments and quotations of this sort: if one good argument will not answer the purpose, a thousand would do no good.

And now, in conclusion, we will proceed to answer what we conceive to be the strongest objection to our explanation of this text; and that is the case of Esau. It is thought by many that Esau was certainly created for a bad end; forasmuch as it was said before he was born, or had done any good or evil, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." And it is very justly argued that if God could make one man for a bad end, he might make millions for the same purpose.

That the difference between Jacob and Esau was a temporal and political one is certainly true. God said to Abraham, "In thy seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;" which promise looked to the Messiah that was to come. It was further revealed to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." But it happens that Isaac has two sons, Jacob and Esau; and though much interest was felt in this promise, it was not revealed to which of these two sons the promise applied. Hence the controversy on that subject between Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac willed that it should be Esau; but "it is not of him that willeth." Esau ran to the woods for venison that he might obtain the blessing; but "it is not of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," in a temporal sense, to one more than to another. The promise could not be fulfilled in the families

of both Esau and Jacob. God certainly had a right to choose which should be the favored one, and he chose Jacob. Hence arose all the privileges in the family of Jacob above that of Esau, which was certainly the only difference made in favor of Jacob, and that a temporal difference, which terminated with time. But the assertion that Jacob ever had a better chance to get to heaven than Esau, is a libel upon Scripture truth; for God requires of each according to that which he has given him, and no more; which brings all, in a spiritual sense, upon equal footing; and in this sense alone is he no respecter of persons.

But it further happened with regard to this promise made to Abraham, that Jacob had twelve sons; and hence would have arisen a still greater difficulty as to which of these should inherit the promise, had not God revealed to Jacob, when on his death-bed, that the Saviour or "Lawgiver", should come in the tribe of Judah; which revelation settled the question with respect to Jacob's sons; so that there were no more difficulties on the subject.

We conclude, therefore, that God never did create one single soul as the property of the devil. Indeed, if he had, the preacher would be a swindler should he strive to get him from his lawful owner. And now it appears to me that this is one of the plainest texts in the New Testament, and one well calculated to influence sinners to repent. For when it is proved to the satisfaction of a thinking man that it is his privilege to repent, and that in that sense he is glorified, if the goodness of God herein extended to him will not lead him to repentance, I know of nothing within

the range of human thought that might be expected to do so. And then how plain the text! God foreknew all; predestinated or appointed all to the privilege of being conformed to the image of his Son; in order to which he calls all; and, as it would be a great pity for us to suffer for what Adam did, absolves all from the guilt of Adam's sin; and glorified all the Gentile nations by granting them the same high privileges extended to the Jews; so that the difference between Jacob and Esau no longer exists.

And even those nations that have not the gospel are a law unto themselves. The Spirit writes this law upon their hearts; and in so far as it is thus written they are expected to be conformed to the image of Christ. Whoever, then, leaves this world without that conformity to the image of Christ, so far as his circumstances would allow, will find that want of conformity to be a hell too intolerable to be borne: a hell, this, so much worse than fire and brimstone, that the latter is only an emblem of it. Allow me, therefore, to exhort, that since this doctrine makes it your privilege to be conformed to the image of Christ, seek that conformity, nor dare to die without it.

SERMON III.

CALLING AND ELECTION

vs

TOTAL APOSTASY

SERMON III

CALLING AND ELECTION *vs.* TOTAL APOSTASY.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."—2 PET. i. 10.

THAT this text is addressed to true Christians will not be doubted, when we consider that the apostle, in the first verse of the Epistle from which it is taken, addresses himself "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us;" and when we consider, further, that he calls them "brethren" in the text. All the good advice given, then, and all the contingencies contemplated in the text, belong to true Christians, and are hereby appropriated to them by the apostle. We hope this fact—which is an important one—will be kept in mind by our readers.

I. We will proceed to consider the terms calling and election. These terms seem to be coupled together in our text, and apply to the same thing; and they mean, as we think, the final salvation of those brethren in heaven. A home in heaven was that to which they were called: to a home in heaven, even before they had done any good or evil, for what Christ had done and suffered for them, they were elected.

It is obvious that this is the meaning of these terms; forasmuch as the apostle seemed to think that when once it was made sure, the end both of their calling and election was attained. That God hath called us with a holy calling, or to the attainment of holiness preparatory for heaven, is clearly stated in 2 Tim. i. 9. The same passage also as clearly shows that he had elected us, in Christ, to the attainment of that great object before the world began. Then if there is now, or ever has been, or ever will be a being on earth who was not so elected and so called, it follows that that being had no salvation to neglect, and consequently could not be called a neglecter of this "great salvation;" inasmuch as it was never intended for him. We conclude, therefore, and we think safely, that all were so elected and so called; for if they were not, then of course their destruction is their misfortune; for it had never been in their power to prevent either Adam's sin or their own.

This notion of calling and election precisely corresponds with our views of predestination found in the foregoing discourse; and it corresponds also, as we think, with the whole Bible, when properly understood.

While the text before us, according to the views here given, is equally applicable to all mankind, and while all mankind are required to make their "calling and election sure," the apostle evidently intends here to show that the calling and election of true Christians, so long as they are in this world, is not yet sure.

II. We now proceed to notice the fact, that the calling and election of the brethren here addressed was not yet

sure. Indeed, how could it be, when it alluded to their safe arrival in heaven, and they were still upon earth? As long, therefore, as they were on earth, they were not sure of heaven. In every system of theology with which I am acquainted, there is doubt placed at some point; and this doubt is wisely intended to exert a moral influence upon the lives of its professors. For instance, John Calvin was too great a man to frame a system of theology in which this doubt was not somewhere placed; but the genius of his system required him to place it upon our present attainments, as it would certainly be unwise to allow men to know that they have religion, and to know also that they cannot finally lose it. Both these points of knowledge put together would enable the professor to know himself already in heaven, which knowledge would certainly be at war with the diligence recommended in our text. Calvin's system, therefore, requires all to strive, not knowing who belongs to the favored party. But the apostle in our text evidently places this doubt upon our future perseverance; for, while he allows us clearly to know that we have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, he still declares that our calling and election is not thereby made sure; and would have us give all diligence, that in future we may not lose our hold upon the object of our calling and election. I have known professors of religion to indulge in drunkenness, and still encourage themselves with the hope of heaven, upon the notion that they could not finally lose their religion. But when we remember the many temptations to which we are exposed in the world, and how much there is in our own

evil nature that inclines us to sin, how heavy the cross to be borne, and how much self-denial is necessary to final perseverance, it would certainly be unsafe to give all the believers in that doctrine as surety for our appearance in heaven; and they would all sign the bond at a word, provided we now have religion. With so many sureties for our safe arrival in heaven, we might be allowed prison-bounds at least, by way of indulgences; and lest we might take such indulgences, let us not trust a soul worth so much upon the doctrine.

And surely this doubt with regard to our future perseverance, together with a clear knowledge of our present attainments, should have a better influence upon our lives than to leave us all our lifetime striving in ignorance as to whether God made us for heaven or hell. Especially should this be so in view of the fact that the Scriptures abundantly prove that we may know for ourselves, and not another, that our "Redeemer liveth." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

Whenever I hear a Calvinist say that he knows he has religion, and is in a state of acceptance with God, and yet believes that he cannot finally lose that religion, I set him down as being very ignorant of his own system, and of the Bible generally. For if he understands his own system correctly, then there is left him no motive to diligence, self-denial, or cross-bearing. If he believed the possibility of total apostasy—for no other apostasy is worth considering—then he might well deny himself, take up his cross, and bear and do all that God sends upon him or requires of him, in

order to the attainment of that crown to which he was called and elected.

III. We will notice the word rather. This word supposes that the brethren had a free choice between two courses which the apostle had pointed out to them. After regarding them in the light of Christians by "like precious faith," he first exhorts them to give "all diligence," and by that means add to their "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." These are the various rounds of that ladder leading to heaven, to which they were elected. Then after pointing out to them the advantages of this course—that they should "neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"—he proceeds to point out the contrary course that might be pursued by these same brethren; that is, failing to give "all diligence"—giving but occasional diligence—and the result would be that they would lack the additions to their faith before mentioned. He then explains to them that the consequences of lacking these additions would be, that they would become blind, so that they could not see afar off; could not see the end from the beginning; could not see far enough to contemplate how they would stand in the day of judgment. On these subjects they were purblind, and looked only to their own ease and earthly enjoyment; to the things which are seen and temporal, losing sight of those things which are unseen, and which are eternal. And, in fact, they might go so far back from the "like precious

faith" by which they were purged from their old sins, as even to forget that they were so purged; which they could certainly not be said to forget if such purging had never taken place. Now these are the two courses plainly brought to view by the apostle; and he kindly advises his brethren, rather than to follow a course of neglect and indolence, to "give all diligence;" as well he might, for he had himself tasted the bitter cup of a backslider.

How a minister of the gospel can hope to give an account of his ministry with joy at the bar of God, who has failed to warn his brethren of the danger of total apostasy, (provided Peter was right in the text, and the doctrine he taught is true,) is passing strange to me. For the benefit of such ministers, allow me to present the following illustration:

There was a great auction to be held on a certain day, in a certain market-place, the sale of whose wares was to involve the interests of all around; and Satan himself was to be present on the occasion. As the smaller ware is always sold first, a grogseller was first put up. Satan bid a trifling sum for him, remarking to the crowd that if they bid over that, they might take him; for he was but a scandal to him at best. A Universalist preacher was next put up. Satan also bid a small sum for him, again remarking that any one who bid over that might take him; for his doctrine was so far obsolete that it was doing him very little good. His majesty then addressed the crowd in the following words: "Gentlemen, I am a strong man, and keep my goods in peace, nor am I much afraid of losing them; but as the leader of a large party of human kind, and there being many

thousands of them who have revolted from under my government, the great policy with me is, to win those revolters back to their allegiance to me. Now if you have here a preacher who will go out and convince them that they can never finally fall from grace, and get them fully persuaded of that fact—I knowing the contrary to be true—I think I shall stand a good chance of getting them to return to their former obedience to me." Whereupon he was informed that there were hundreds of just such preachers on hand; and one of them being put up, his first bid was the whole of California. He then said if any one present was able to dare bid against him, he would bid all of Australia besides rather than lose so valuable a servant.

And now, candid reader, you surely will not imagine that Satan is so great a fool as to strive all the lifetime of a Christian to get him away from Christ, when he knows that it is impossible for him to do so. Perhaps it will be argued by some that his success with Eve has flattered him into this laborious and useless undertaking. Before we proceed farther on this subject, it may be remarked that his success with Eve is a strong argument in favor of Peter's opinion on the subject; which was, as may be clearly seen in the text before us, that it was possible finally to apostatize from the faith.

If the great Maker of mankind had in reserve at the first a method by which he could govern morally responsible agents, accountable to him for their conduct, so as to secure the certainty of their future perseverance, then it is obvious that had he set up that system then, Adam and Eve had not

fallen. Indeed, the system which supposes that after we are recovered from the fall we are then sure of heaven, either supposes that God kept back this favorable method of governing his creatures, or that he gained experience by Adam's fall; and those whom he was pleased to recover from that fall, he now places under this better form of government, so as to prevent their falling again. This last supposition will be readily granted to be absurd, as it would charge our Maker with the consequences of the fall, as, indeed, the Supralapsarian system does, though it is elsewhere denied in that system.

The learned Dr. J——, of South Carolina, has been heard to say: "The argument on the subject of apostasy, founded on the fall of Adam and Eve, would be conclusive and put the question at rest, were the premises true on which it is founded. But this I deny. Yes, brethren, I deny that Adam and Eve were in a state of grace before the fall." When so learned a man as Dr. J—— is obliged to resort to such an argument as the above in order to extricate himself from a difficulty in which the effort to support a favorite theory has involved him, the cause he serves must be a very lame one indeed. If Adam and Eve were not in the favor of God (which is the meaning of the word grace) before the fall, then from what did they fall? We will drop the learned Doctor here, having given him all that his argument deserves.

IV We will next consider the method that the apostle advises us to adopt, in order to make our calling and election sure. Having previously pointed out the various graces to

be attained after we get religion, he contents himself in the text before us with simply saying, "Give diligence." This advice embodies all that is necessary to a Christian in order that he may get to heaven, or make his "calling and election sure." The word diligence is so commonly used, and has such a universal application to all the avocations of life, that its plain meaning is perhaps more generally understood than that of most other words in the English language. It is evident that the word implies something to be done by us; and truly we could do nothing good before we obtained religion; but now, having obtained it, and having entered upon the Christian warfare, we "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth" us.

The work to be done is the addition of those graces before mentioned; and the method of doing it, being previously mentioned in this chapter, is repeated in the text, "Give diligence." No man hopes to succeed in any other business he may chance to follow without diligence; and why should he hope, because he is now converted, that heaven—the boon of greatest good to man—is to be obtained without further diligence in the pursuit of it? I can see no motive within the range of human thought, calculated to prompt a man to the indulgence of so absurd a hope, except, indeed, it be indulged as an excuse for indolence, which is ever at war with diligence. But, alas for the indolent professor! while the diligent soul shall be made fat, he shall beg in harvest and have nothing. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? [religion among the rest.] He shall stand before kings." Indeed, he shall stand when kings shall fall.

As no man by indolence ever came to any good in this world, so, we think, he cannot come to a good end in the next. But unless he is convinced that indolence will cause him to forfeit his calling and election, and miss heaven in the end, there is no penalty in the law of Christ sufficiently strong to enforce diligence upon his lazy nature. We conclude, therefore, with the apostle, that unless he "give diligence," he will fall totally; which leads us to the fifth and last particular of our text.

V "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The apostle by this expression explains that his object in the preceding part of the chapter was to warn his brethren of the danger of falling. And we suppose that a final and eternal fall only would be worthy of his attention; since no partial or momentary fall, with the certainty of rising again, could do them any great injury. True, it might cause them some suffering in this world, but it could not affect their future happiness; for it may be said of those who really get to heaven, that their sufferings by the way were but "light afflictions," working out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We think, therefore, that the apostle here warned them of the danger of falling totally. This doctrine is furthermore supported by many plain texts of Scripture, such as—"It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Now it is certain that if they had not known the way of life, they would experience future punishment; but now, having apostatized from the

faith, their case is still worse; but it could not be worse unless they were lost.

I might fill a volume with just such quotations, but I will forbear, and refer you to the New Testament as a single quotation. But, says one, I find many texts in the New Testament which prove a contrary doctrine; such as—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39. This passage simply proves the consoling doctrine, that no violence from without shall be able to force us away from Christ. Indeed, if any of these forces brought against us could separate us from Christ, then all would be so separated from him. But it is nowhere said in this passage that we ourselves cannot forsake Christ; and if we forsake him, it is said that he will forsake us.

If you will search the New Testament strictly, you will find that all those passages that are usually quoted in favor of the doctrine of infallible perseverance, are wrested out of their proper meaning, in order to support a favorite theory and indulge Christians in indolence, even as the one above noticed. There can be no contradictions in the Scriptures when properly understood. I have examined carefully all the texts usually brought in favor of the doctrine of infallible perseverance, and honestly think that they are all misconstrued, and that there is not a text in the Bible

that will in any degree qualify or lower the meaning of the apostle in our text.

Indeed, if a Christian is in no danger of apostasy, it would be unwise to let him know it, as he would in that case be as safe without this knowledge as with it. Nor do we think that Infinite Wisdom would reveal such a fact, even if it were a fact, in view of all the self-denial, cross-bearing, and diligence necessary to a Christian life. I hope, therefore, that no Christian, of any denomination, will risk his salvation upon such a theory; but that all will give "all diligence" to make their "calling and election sure;" as by so doing they will be safe, even if it should prove to be true that they cannot finally lose their religion; and if the doctrine be found in the end to be false, they will still be on the safe side.

SERMON IV.

THE GOOD FIGHT.

SERMON IV

THE GOOD FIGHT.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."—1 TIM. vi. 12.

THE apostle here draws a figure from an occupation that is but too familiar to Adam's sons—that of fighting. They often fight the bad fight, but we are here exhorted to fight the good fight; that is, we must fight against evil, and in favor of goodness. It is termed the good fight of faith, inasmuch as all that is good to mankind is obtained by faith. Under the idea of a warfare, the subject of religion presents itself in a very striking point of view in many respects. In allusion to military tactics, therefore, we will pursue this subject; and, as all wars waged among men are declared in the name of the head of the government under which they fight, we will, in the first place, notice the reasons why Adam's family should fight against the devil and his hosts. As all wars are either honorable or dishonorable, owing to the reasons upon which they are founded, much importance should be attached to these reasons.

1. The first reason that we shall notice is, that this enemy of mankind has a large and invaluable treasure in his pos-

session. It is estimated that there are nine hundred millions of human souls in existence at one time; and if we take all the faithful Christians, all the infants, all the idiots, and all the pious heathens who would go to heaven should they die now, out of that number, we shall have scarcely the half of it left. Let us, however, charitably suppose that half of the nine hundred millions are now in a state of acceptance with God: this leaves four hundred and fifty millions of human souls under the dominion of Satan. They are of their father the devil, because they do his works; and according to Christ's own estimate on the value of a soul, each one of them is worth more than "the whole world." What a treasure this, found in the hands of this arch enemy of mankind! And shall we not fight, that we may, if possible, rescue them from under his dominion?

2. He has no lawful right to one of them. But if God had made them expressly for him, as some have supposed, then it would be an eternal disgrace to Christianity should its followers try to get them from him; but when we consider that he is a trespasser, and has led them away captives from their rightful Sovereign, then it is certainly noble to attempt their rescue.

3. He can and will bring about the final ruin of all that remain in his dominions. But if, as some say, they will all finally be saved, it is but a useless fight; since in that case he would only be able to worry them for a time, which worrying would be amply repaid in heaven, as it would make their joys there the sweeter. The devil would then be only acting the part of a shepherd's dog—to worry and

drive the sheep home to their rightful owner. But the contrary of this is awfully true: he can certainly produce their final overthrow. This doctrine of endless punishment is professedly believed by the whole orthodox world; but where is the zeal and energy put forth by them commensurate with this belief? Who among them exerts himself for the salvation of souls in bondage to Satan, as though they would be eternally ruined if not speedily rescued?

We have now shown the reasons upon which our war with Satan is waged, and every man who wishes well to mankind should heartily engage with us in the good fight, or else prove that these reasons are fallacious. We cannot suppose that any man would stand back from such a struggle for the good of his race through mere cowardice, when he is convinced that his cause is a good one. We repeat, therefore, that we expect every man either to engage with us, or to show good and sound reasons why we should not fight the good fight.

II. Encouraged by the belief that our reasons for fighting are good, we will now proceed to give some directions as to how we are to make war against Satan.

1. The first step a man takes towards engaging in any warfare, is to join the army who fight on his side. So we advise you—join Zion's army. And as in military tactics there are many companies under the same field-officer, so in Zion's army there are many companies or denominations engaged to fight against Satan and sin. Now we do not say which of these companies or denominations you shall join. You may have denominational prejudices growing

out of various circumstances, such as family alliances, early training, etc.; and we wish you to join that company in which you will fight the longest and hardest against Satan, and where you will meet the fewest indulgences for sin. There are, no doubt, good soldiers of the cross in each of these companies, and we are not solicitous to which of them you attach yourself. Provided you are a valiant soldier, and will never, like a Hull or an Arnold, betray the good cause, this is all that will be required of you.

The various companies of Zion's army have each its company drill. Some indeed may be more strictly drilled in the exercises and use of the armor than others. If you join the Methodist company, for instance, you will be expected to attend muster, and go through the exercises of the drill, at least once a week — for so it is written in our military discipline—and every time you miss a muster, our orderly-sergeant, the class-leader, will make his mark against you. Then if you are very dull, and slow to learn the exercises of the drill, you will be placed in what is called in an army "the awkward squad," where you will be drilled twice as often as your more expert fellow-soldiers. And furthermore, you must be an apt scholar indeed in military affairs, before you can rise in this company to a higher office. But, for your encouragement, we will suggest that the better you perform your duty, the more honor you will receive when the Inspector-General shall pass you under his review.

2. As a second direction, we repeat to you the advice which the Apostle Paul gives to the Ephesians: "Put on

the whole armor of God." The various articles of this panoply are enumerated in the Epistle to the Ephesians, to which we refer you. But as this is termed in our text "the good fight of faith," we will make a few remarks on this implement of our warfare; and we observe that just where eyesight ends, there faith begins; that all our foes are invisible to the natural eye; and as faith is a belief in things not seen, ours is therefore a fight of faith. The apostle further advises, "Above all, take the shield of faith." Faith, then, is a shield. The soldier wears his shield on his left arm, while he makes battle with his right; and the shield is so arranged as, when properly wielded, to turn off the darts of his enemy. So, in our warfare, the soldier may be able, by a proper use of the shield of faith, to ward off the darts of Satan. For instance, Satan tells him there is no hell; God tells him there is a hell: now, faith being simply belief, if he believe God and act accordingly—that is, shun the vices which the same God who tells him there is a hell, also says will lead him to it—he, by this simple belief, will effectually ward off this dart of the enemy. We might multiply instances, but with this simple specimen of the use of the shield, we pass on.

3. The next admonition we shall give you is, Be united. Without union it is clear that no campaign can be brought to a favorable issue. Many armies in ancient times were defeated for the want of union among themselves. For instance, on one occasion when a host of "the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east," came against Israel, though they were "like grasshoppers for

multitude, and their camels were without number as the sand by the sea-side for multitude," yet Gideon, with only three hundred men, was enabled to overcome them, because "the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host." Let us learn from this the important lesson that in union alone is strength.

In this war, as we before remarked, Adam's family form one party, and Satan and sin the other; and while we are engaged in fighting one another rather than warning sinners to repent, or in preaching doctrines that would excuse them for impenitence, merely for the sake of building up a party, Satan is doubtless laughing in his sleeve at our want of skill; and infidelity will surely tread upon the heels of such unholy warfare. Then be united. By this we do not mean to say that all should think alike; this we know to be impossible; but there must be a union of feeling, a union of affection, and a union of effort, on the part of all who would successfully oppose Satan and sin. But hark! I hear a rumor in the camp of Israel, and it sounds like the death-knell of the cause. The great Captain of our salvation spreads his table with a bounteous feast, and invites all his officers and soldiers to partake of his bounty together; and notwithstanding some little bickerings and petty strifes may exist among them down in the barracks where they are stationed, they will surely leave all these behind when they come to the General's table. But the contrary of this is but too true. I see the captain of one company drawing his sword over the table, and demanding terms of the others ere they shall eat with him. For one captain to demand terms

of another, is humiliating enough; but let us hear his terms: "If you and your men will submit to certain modes and forms of ceremony—join my company, and let me be the captain of the whole host, all the other companies becoming extinct—then, and not till then, will I eat with you."

And now, candidly, while the members of one Church hold such dividing sentiments, and so rigidly maintain them, all their pretensions to union with other Churches are very inconsistent. We should not make such claims upon one another. When a man takes the sacrament, he takes it upon his faith in Christ, not in me or other men; and though he may have some peculiarities in matters of faith that do not happen to suit me, still I have no right to reject him, provided he is an upright man, and is in full standing in any Church believing in the divinity of Christ; for, under these circumstances, he has as clear a right as I or any other man to remember Christ. We would say then to those who hold this schismatical practice of close communion, leave it off, as you value the cause of Christ; or else never again advertise yourselves as advocates for union.

We shall now proceed to marshal Zion's army. In doing this, we shall in part follow the lamented Cookman, who, in a speech on this subject, placed each company where it would probably fight the hardest. As the Presbyterian Church had, before his day, taken more pains than others to qualify their preachers for the ministry, he made them an artillery, and placed them in the centre of the army: we will allow them the same station. As the Protestant Episcopal Church was the first in this country to say that

they were the only true Church, he allowed them to form the right wing: we will let them there remain. And as he made of the Methodist a cavalry, who should scour the frontiers, and attack the enemy in advance of the main army, we will still allow them to do so. Of the various other branches of the Christian Church, we will form the left wing; except the Baptists—of them we will form a navy; and hope, should the enemy attempt to land on our borders, they will give him a broadside from "the old ship of Zion."

But hark! another alarm! There is an old spy who has long been lurking about the camp of Zion. He is quite old and gray-headed, and for his gray hairs might now be respected, but for the wicked life he has led. For your further acquaintance with him, we will inform you that his name is Bigot. He stealthily makes his way to the Presbyterians in the centre of the army, and tells them, "But for the Arminians, you would soon evangelize the world." He slips around to the dock-yard and tells the Baptists, "But for the Pedobaptists, you would soon dip the world." He meets with the Methodists on the frontier and tells them, "But for the Calvinists, you would stand a fair chance to take the world by storm." Now let all parties unite in putting down this common enemy. If the Presbyterians find him in the centre, let them open upon him a whole round of artillery. If the Methodists meet him on the frontier, it will become their duty to charge upon him sword in hand. If the Baptists meet with him on the coast, we hope they will sink him to the bottom of the mighty deep; for there can be no union while he is suffered to live.

III. Knowing as we do the tardiness of mankind to engage in that which is good, we will proceed to offer some inducements to influence them to fight the good fight. But here our sole embarrassment is a superabundance. There are so many thousands of reasons why we should engage in this holy war, that we are at a loss to know which to offer first.

1. We have often heard it said that a good commander is half the battle; but in the war in which we are engaged, it might almost be said that our Commander-in-chief, the great Captain of our salvation, is all the battle. We read on the page of history of the wonders that have been accomplished by the skill of a single commander: we read of the exploits of Hannibal, Alexander of Macedon, Fabius, Julius Cæsar, and Mohammed the second, and of the victories gained by Gustavus Adolphus, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Peter the Great; but in the history of our own country we find recorded the name of Washington, the greatest commander that ever lived. But who was General Washington? A mere subaltern under our Commander. Washington himself did not blush to acknowledge the Captain of our salvation as his superior, for before an important battle he was found on his knees imploring the aid of our Captain, knowing that without him he could do nothing. Indeed, he is the great Commander who by his single arm gained for us a complete victory over the guilt of Adam's sin; and now promises to stand by us in the hottest battles, and secure for us the victory. Who would not fight under so great a Commander?

2. We have large bounty given us in hand. Though we have been revolters and deserters from the standard of our Captain, he abundantly pardons us all, and imparts to us "the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

3. We have good usage, are well cared for, and provided with every thing that is good; for "no good thing will he withhold" from us. His storehouses are open and free to all; and he allows the head of the mess, or of the family, to draw large supplies morning and evening in his family. All who have ever fought under him have been well fed, well clothed, and comfortably lodged.

4. We are assured of certain victory. Methinks I hear that soldier who is to go out in defence of his country, as he shoulders his knapsack, secretly propounding to himself the momentous question, "Shall we be victorious? Could I be assured that we should conquer, and that I might return again in peace to my family and friends, bearing the laurel of victory with me, then I could most cheerfully undergo the fatigues and privations of war." But in this war against sin, He who cannot be mistaken assures you that certain victory shall perch upon the point of your sword. Surely, with this assurance, you will heartily engage to do and suffer all that is required of you in the attainment of so desirable an end; especially as the advantages to be reaped are infinite.

5. As a last inducement, and one that for aught we know might have superseded all others, you shall have a soldier's right in heaven; for the text says, "Lay hold on eternal life." Many of our revolutionary soldiers, being dismissed

from the army with but very little pay, had rights given them to lots of land in the far West; but these lots being in a far-off wilderness inhabited only by wild beasts, those to whom they were granted would not move thither, but sold them, in many cases, for a mere trifle. Not so with our soldiers' right. It is not granted in a distant wilderness, but in heaven itself—not in an unpopulated country, but in one to which all the good of all ages are gone. It lies hard by the lot that was laid out for your father, mother, brother, sister, and child. In a word, you shall live neighbor to all that ever have gone or ever will go to heaven. We exhort you, therefore, to "fight the good fight" with all the courage of a valiant soldier, in order that you may "lay hold on eternal life," granted to you under so favorable circumstances and in so desirable a place. But do not forget that in order to fight the good fight, and win an inheritance in this blessed place, you must be freed from sin. We close the subject, therefore, by admonishing you to get rid of all sin, as its least remains will disqualify you for the pure associations of heaven.

SERMON V.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

SERMON V

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATT. xviii. 20.

IT has been said by some, that the Jewish priest was required to perform the duties of the sanctuary if he had ten hearers. The number ten, according to them, was a constitutional number of worshippers in the Jewish Church; but our Saviour has reduced that number in the Christian Church down to two or three; and while, as an omnipresent Being, he is present everywhere, yet he has promised more especially to manifest that presence where two or three are gathered together in his name. While it is our privilege to enter into our closet and shut the door, and pray to our Father in secret, who will reward us openly, yet hath he enlarged our privileges by the promise of his presence in public worship. He has informed us that if two of us on earth shall agree touching the thing we ask the Father in his name, it shall be done for us. For the sake of this agreement in our prayers, public worship is made necessary. But the whole blessing of the Divine presence depends on

the fact that we are met in his name. We proceed, therefore,

I. 1. To inquire what is implied in meeting in the name of Christ. In doing this, it is proper to state that the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Baptist Churches, claim each to be the only true Church; therefore all others meet in disorder, and not in the name of Christ. Now, with all this respectable array against us, shall we arrogantly claim to be the true worshippers of Christ, and expect to realize the promise of the text? Before we can do so, we must weigh those several claims against us as candidly as possible. It will be readily seen that the great question of succession must here be settled; and in discussing this question, we shall lose sight of the thousands of pages that have been written on the subject, and take the New Testament for our guide. It seems to us that there is a single point which, being properly settled, would put the question to rest. It is this: Did God delegate the right to call preachers to the Church, or did he reserve that right to himself? That he reserved it to himself is clear from Christ's own statement; for he says, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest [not the elders of the Church] that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." And if he reserved the right to call preachers, we have instances, both in the case of Melchizedek and Christ, where he called out of the regular line of succession. This fact was the main reason why our Saviour was rejected by the Jews. They stumbled at this monstrous stumbling-stone of succession. The Apostle Paul will further aid us in arriving

at the truth on this subject. While we are free to acknowledge that success in getting members to a party is no mark of Divine favor, yet Paul teaches us that success in getting sinners to come to Christ is the seal of apostleship. We conclude from this that the holy lives of the professors belonging to any party, are the true sign that the preachers of that party were called of God; for the devil would never send out men to be the instruments of making their fellow-creatures better. God is the source of all goodness, and if those who have been influenced to embrace religion through their instrumentality have ceased to do evil and learned to do well, then God must have called them to the work, though they may not be able to lay any claim to succession. For instance, we will take the Methodist Church, and ask, Did God ever bring sinners to repentance through their instrumentality? The answer will be readily given. They have been instrumental in calling thousands and tens of thousands, both in their own Church and in others, to the obedience of faith. And now we have only to ask, Did the after-lives of those converts comport with their profession? If so, then the seals of our apostleship are ye in the Lord. 1 Cor. ix. 2. And we may truly add with the apostle: "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you." We conclude, therefore, that all the arrogant claims made by these Churches to succession, in the absence of these signs, are but advertising themselves the adulterated sons of a noble ancestry. Let all "dissenters," therefore, fearlessly claim the Divine presence, if they have the marks of apostleship laid down by the Apostle Paul, as quoted above. And

now let us inquire what is further implied in meeting in the name of Christ.

2. A sense of dependence on Christ. Were you dependent on a fellow-creature for all temporal good, and were assured that he would be at a certain place on a certain day, you would be sure to attend on that occasion. But knowing that you are dependent on Christ for all good of every kind, and he has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst," and that he never disappoints, you will certainly make one of that number, in order that you may receive supplies at his hand; nor will trifling excuses keep you away.

3. That those who meet in his name, meet with a firm belief in his divinity, and consequent ability to bless them. For you must know that there is not a passage in the New Testament where Christ lays a higher claim to divinity than he does in this text. Suppose a million of congregations to have met in his name at the same time: who but God could be present with them all? And further, if Christ required us to meet in his name when he is not God, then he required us to be idolaters for his sake; and he certainly was either God, or the worst man that God ever made; inasmuch as no other has ever laid so high a claim to divinity as he has done in our text. He is, therefore, "God with us," and able to bless us. Let us therefore fearlessly meet in his name. It is implied,

4. That we possess a firm and unshaken purpose not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in his name. If you doubt that this particular is implied in the text,

place yourself in circumstances where the words of the text would be literally true. Suppose all had forsaken Christ exeept two or three: would you make one of that small number in the face of such strong opposition? You must possess a great deal of firmness to do so. Now truth is as immutable as its Divine author; and what is true now was always true, and will be true for ever; and our text was fulfilled to the letter in a ease that we find recorded in the Old Testament. We refer to that of the three Hebrew ehildren in the fiery furnace. God will "try them that dwell upon the earth." He tried even Abraham; and there came a time when he tried the Jews also. They were all very good religionists while they remained in Jerusalem, but now they are all sent away captives to Babylon. And will they consider God, who made Babylon as well as Judea, worthy of praise in this foreign land? Alas, no. They all hung their harps upon the willows, and refused to sing the songs of Zion. But they are tried still further. The King of Babylon made a golden image, and set it up on the plain of Dura, ordered a band of music, and passed a decree that at the sound of the music all the people of his realm should fall down and worship this golden image. Now image-worship was as poisonous to the Jews as the temperance pledge is to a drunkard. If they bow to that image, they will saerifice the last vestige of their pretensions to religion; and if they do not thus bow, they are to be cast into a burning, fiery furnace. And, alas! they all bowed to the image (thinking perhaps that they could not fall from grace, and would thus escape both fires) except three. This noble three refused;

dreading, as we think, a worse fire than that furnace. The king, being informed of their refusal, could not believe it possible that they should have the madness to defy his power. He sent for them, and asked them if it was true. They told him that it was. He then very graciously offered them pardon for the past, provided they would bow to the image when the music sounded again. But, being jealous of their integrity, he told them, if they refused the second time, that they should be cast the same hour into the furnace; and then, with all the pomposity of a foolhardy sinner, exclaimed, "Who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" But the Hebrews, indifferent to all this rage, would not take the time proposed to consider the matter, but told him at once that they would not bow down to his gods—that their God was able to deliver them. Whether he would deliver them from the fire, or take them to heaven through it, they did not seem to know; but in either case they affirmed that they would not bow down. Here are men of firmness indeed. Look at them, and be wise. One such man is worth millions of poor cowards, who will desert a good cause in the hour of danger. The king was so enraged that "the form of his visage was changed." He ordered the furnace to be made seven times hotter than had been intended, and had them cast into it, with all their garments upon them. He felt for a moment, perhaps, his wrath appeased. But I see him look with intense interest into the furnace. Suddenly he exclaims to his courtiers, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "True, O king." "Lo, I see four men

loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Jesus was in their midst. Though they were met in an unfavorable place, he fulfilled to them the promise of our text, and met with them. Those Hebrew children were the noble souls who might claim the promise of the text; and all such may still claim it, till the world shall end, to whatever Church or party they may chance to belong.

We may therefore humbly claim, in the face of all the array of arrogance brought against us, to be a regularly constituted Church of Christ, according to the apostolic test; and may, therefore, expect the promise of the Divine presence to be fulfilled in our meetings. Especially may this be the case, since we deny that claim to none who have those marks of apostleship given by the Apostle Paul as quoted above.

II. We shall consider the blessings of the Divine presence as expressed in the words, "There am I in the midst." How little can we know in this dark world of the extent of those blessings! All that ever has been said, or all that ever will be said of them to the end of time, will fall infinitely short of doing them justice. The contemplation of them opens to us a field so vast and extensive, that we can never be able fully to explore it. But in order to do so in some degree, we will commence at the fiery furnace, where we left those noble Hebrews. What was his presence worth to them on that momentous occasion? We are told that they came out of that fire unhurt, without even the smell of fire having passed upon their garments. And they were thus miracu-

lously preserved, because Jesus was with them. But why bring up that old Jewish history? says one. Because, my brother, if you ever get to heaven—and God grant you may —you will go through a fiery furnace of affliction and trial ere you reach that blessed land; and your only hope for safety in this furnace is, that Christ go through it with you. If you ever get safely out of this world without the stains of moral evil upon you, it will be owing to his presence which has been with you by the way. Moses, the greatest lawgiver the world ever saw, save him whose presence we claim, was so well convinced of the necessity of the Divine presence through the wilderness, that he virtually refused to go without it; as well he might, for on that presence alone hung his only hope of success. It is equally true of us, that on his presence depends our only hope of contending successfully with the difficulties that will certainly be found in our pathway of life.

How opportunely was he present with Peter one night on the sea of Galilee! In the midst of a storm, while he was sinking beneath the waves, he cried, "Lord, save me!" and the Saviour reached out his hand and drew him up from a watery grave. But his presence was worth no more to Peter on that occasion than it will be worth to you a thousand times between this and the grave. You will sink in the vortex of ruin, if he be not there to hold you up.

We see, then, that his presence is worth every thing to us in meeting with the difficulties of life; and how important will be that presence when we lie down to die! The Psalmist has told us, "Though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and gives as a reason, "For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." If he is with us then, we will feel, as Dr. Watts has expressed it,

"Jesus can make a dying-bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

In a word—

"His presence makes our paradise,
And where he is, is heaven."

Therefore, if he be present when we assemble to worship in his name, it is heaven already begun, for "in his presence is fulness of joy." How many of his faithful followers have met the ills of life, and waded through tribulations here, with a patience and resignation that mere philosophy could never have inspired; and at last, while his presence gilded the horrors of the gloomy grave, died triumphantly, and left a testimony behind them that they are gone to be with him in his Father's kingdom! For they know that he had promised, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He who made the world in six days, has already been more than eighteen hundred years preparing a place for us, and how much longer it will be before he comes again we know not. But what a place must that be, prepared by such a workman, employed for such a length of time, in

order that he may fulfil the promise, "Where I am, there shall ye be also!"

Such, my brethren, is the place to which we shall go if we are his faithful followers to the end. If we "endure hardness as good soldiers," and "as seeing Him that is invisible," he will be with us in six troubles, and not forsake us in the seventh. And if he has promised to be with us from here to the grave, and then we may go and be with him, I see no reason why we should part with him any more from this time henceforth and for ever. Even now, while I am writing, a single smile from that Saviour who has promised to be in our midst, wakes into rapture all the harps and voices of heaven. Indeed, there could be no heaven if he were not there; and if there is any strife in heaven, it is an effort on the part of each to get the nearest to his feet.

But as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man" the things that God hath prepared for them that love him, we shrink from any further attempt to describe the blessings of the Divine presence; and will say, in conclusion, that if you regard his presence as important, remember that he will be with you only in one strait and narrow path, which himself hath marked out for you to walk in. If you should at any time straggle off from that path, he, being unchangeable, will not turn aside with you; and you shall have the light of his presence no more until you return from your wanderings back to the right way. But while you remain in that way, you have the assurance that you are safe from all harm; for none shall be

able to pluck you out of his hand. You will have nothing to fear, therefore, but your own "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." If you avoid this danger, all that heaven which we have not been able to describe, originating in his presence, shall be yours.

SERMON VI.

ON THE TRINITY.

SERMON VI.

ON THE TRINITY

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."—1 JOHN v. 7.

FOR the genuineness of this text, we refer our readers to John Wesley's sermon on the subject, in which he has decided that the text is genuine. Various other critics also, of different schools of theology, have made the same decision. We shall, therefore, take for granted that our text is the word of God; and if so, then he has clearly revealed the doctrine of the Trinity, as we call it, in the words, "these three are one;" and however far above the reach of our reason this doctrine may be, it is to be received and believed upon His authority who cannot lie. Especially should this be so, as it is a doctrine of vital importance to Christianity; for how shall we trust in the merits of Christ's atonement for the pardon of sin, and rely upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unless the fact be fully revealed that "these three are one?" For if Christ be a mere man, and I trust in him for salvation, then the Bible curses me for trusting in an arm of flesh; and if the Divine Spirit is not equal with

the Father, then, under his guidance, I may be all my lifetime going astray. It is therefore of the utmost importance that this doctrine be believed; though there are mysteries connected with it that we can never understand. That we cannot believe a mystery, we fully admit; that we must believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we have shown; and still there is a mystery connected with the doctrine, that we can never understand in this life. This may seem a contradiction, but we will explain. The fact that "these three are one" is no mystery, for it is clearly stated in the text. We are therefore to believe this fact, and in the train of this belief we are to trust in Christ and follow the Spirit, our guide, and fear no evil. How these three can be one, is the mystery, and the only mystery in the subject. How they can be one has never been revealed, or it would be no mystery. It therefore forms no part of our belief. We neither know, nor are we concerned to know, how they can be one; for it makes no difference to us. There are thousands of phenomena in the natural world that involve equal mysteries, and yet they are believed. As, for instance, How does the grass grow? How does the sap of the earth whiten in the lily and blush in the rose? How does the earth turn upon its axis? These are all great mysteries; and yet no man doubts that grass grows, that lilies are white and roses are red, and that the earth turns upon its axis. And again, we do not understand how the consent of the will controls the muscles of the body; and yet no man doubts that his will does control the muscles of his body. If we reject the doctrine before us because we can-

not understand it, we must reject the fact of our own existence for the same reason.

We think all the attempts of writers on this subject to explain how these three can be one, have been worse than useless, many of them ridiculous; for no finite mind can "by searching find out God," any further than he has revealed himself; and these are attempts to find out more of God than he has been pleased to reveal. We conclude, furthermore, that a solution of this mystery would do us no good; inasmuch as God has promised to "withhold no good thing" from them that "walk uprightly." And I am truly sorry that any Christian man ever attempted any such solution; as these attempts to explain what is inexplicable, have certainly done an injury to the good cause which they were intended to promote. We hope, therefore, that so fruitless and foolish a task will never again be attempted. Let it be enough for us to know that "these three are one;" and certainly this is enough for all the purposes of religious enjoyment.

If, as we believe, this truth revealed is far above human reason, it clearly follows that while reason cannot comprehend it, neither can it detect any fallacy therein. I have heard other doctrines preached, however, whose advocates claimed for them that, like the Trinity, they were superior to reason, and must be taken for granted as Divine revelation. I allude to the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism; and honestly think that this is a mistake; for the peculiar "doctrines of grace" taught by Calvin, so far from being superior to reason, are contrary to it. Reason reaches them,

detects their fallacy, and condemns them; and, as we think, the Bible condemns them also. It is very important that we should always be able to distinguish between that which is superior to reason, and that which is contrary to it.

I. As it is universally admitted that the Father mentioned in our text is God, we will take that for granted, and proceed to notice the divinity of "the Word," or Son of God. In doing this it will be well to follow the learned Dr. Durbin on this subject. He informs us that there are three classes of scriptures which speak of the character of Christ. First, that class which speaks of his divinity; second, that class which speaks of his humanity; third, that class which speaks of God and man united in his person. It will be remembered with regard to the first two classes, that they do not at all clash with each other. Indeed, they could not do so, forasmuch as Christ fills the character both of God and man.

We will proceed to notice that class of scriptures which speaks of the divinity of Christ. Col. ii. 9, 10: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Col. i. 16, 17: "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Matt. xviii. 20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (See the sermon on this text.) Matt. xxviii. 19:

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (This form of baptism could never be used with propriety in the case of one who did not believe in the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost.) 1 Tim. iii. 16: "God was manifest in the flesh." 1 John v. 20: "This is the true God and eternal life," (speaking of Christ.) John v. 23: "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." And the Scriptures require us only to give "honor to whom honor is due;" and if honor is equally due to Christ as to the Father, then we may readily believe what Christ often said: "I and my Father are one." In Rom. ix. 8, the apostle, speaking of the Jewish nation, says, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Here we have a text which speaks both of his humanity and divinity. Matt. viii. 23–26: In this passage we find Christ sleeping as a man; but when the disciples awoke him, he rebuked the winds and the sea as a God, and produced "a great calm." Matt. xxi. 18, 19: In this passage it is recorded that Christ hungered as a man, but with a word withered the fig tree as a God. He wept as a man at the tomb of Lazarus, and as a God he called him forth from the grave. And finally he suffered and died as a man, and on the third day he arose as a God. And let no man henceforth dispute the divinity of Christ, unless he can refute the fact of his resurrection. It is everywhere seen in his history, that his contemporaries regarded him as making himself equal with God; and hence the charge against him of blasphemy, they regarding him as a man. But it is acknowledged by his

enemies themselves, that the news of his resurrection would establish his claim to divinity beyond the possibility of refutation. Hence we think that no man should question his divinity, if indeed he arose from the dead; and it is truly astonishing that those who have assailed his Divine character should have labored to overthrow it at any other point than his resurrection; for if that be proved false, his whole system tumbles to ruins; but while that stands firm, the divinity of his character remains impregnable to earth and hell. For who could get up from the grave at the very time of his own prediction except God himself? But as this point will be labored in another discourse, we say no more about it here.

It has always been strange to me how a man could hope for salvation from sin through Jesus Christ, who doubted his divinity, and consequent ability to save him; for we are expressly told that there is no "salvation in any other;" and he is a madman who would uproot the foundation of his own salvation, because, forsooth, he cannot believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one, though God himself has expressly told him that this is so. Let us, therefore, cordially receive the fact itself upon his authority, nor concern ourselves about the mystery connected with it; for God manifest in the flesh is said by the Apostle Paul to be "a great mystery;" yet that he was manifest in the flesh, is a fact well known to history. We might multiply quotations on this head to hundreds, were it necessary; but we deem those already brought amply sufficient, for if they are disputed, hundreds more would share the same fate.

II. We will notice, in the second place, the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The divinity of the Holy Ghost is clearly established by the miraculous gift of tongues which he imparted to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, at the time of his first advent into the world, in accordance with the promise, "If I go away, I will send him unto you." What power less than the power of God could have given them this knowledge of the different languages so instantaneously? His divinity is further proved by the work he was sent to perform. He was to "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" which work he could not fully accomplish unless he were omnipresent. He is called, Heb. ix. 14, "The eternal Spirit;" and none but God is eternal; he is, therefore, God. Again, he calls and sends preachers to preach. Acts xiii. 4: "They being sent forth by the Holy Ghost;" xvi. 6: "And were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia;" xx. 28: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." And again, he is the author of the inspired writings. 2 Pet. i. 21: "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is said, Rom. viii. 16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Now unless he were God and knew what was in man, how could he give such evidence? Many similar texts might be quoted, but we deem these quite sufficient; and think we stand on tenable ground, when we trust in Christ to redeem us, in the Spirit to guide us, and the Father to accept us in the final day; for it is certainly true that "these three are one."

SERMON VII.

ON FAITH.

SERMON VII.

ON FAITH.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts xvi. 31.

It will be remembered that in the early days of Christianity the apostles were everywhere made the subjects of bitter persecution. Under the influence of these persecutions, Paul and Silas were on one occasion cast into prison; and the jailer, having received a very strict charge to keep them safely, "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks;" for, under the regulations of that day, his life must pay the forfeit if they escaped. But at midnight, we are told, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God in the hearing of the other prisoners, and that an earthquake immediately followed, under the influence of which the prison doors were opened, and the bands of the prisoners loosed. The jailer, awaking in a fright, and finding the prison doors opened, readily supposed that the prisoners had fled; and, rather than fall into the hands of the authorities, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. But Paul, at this moment, called to him, and said: "Do thyself no harm." He must have been much astonished that Paul should know that he

was there; for he could not see them on account of the darkness, and had supposed that they were gone. Now the jailer very well knew that Paul and Silas were professors of the new religion set up by Jesus of Nazareth; and he thought, as we suppose, "There must be something more than human about the religion of these men." But Paul continues, "For we are all here;" and he could but ask himself the question: "How should this man know that I was about to kill myself, and the reasons prompting me thereto?" And the conclusion must have been: "A Divine power has revealed this to him, so he informs me 'We are all here.'" He then called for a light, sprang in, and came trembling—as well he might, for he had enough to convince him of the genuineness of their religion—and fell down before Paul and Silas, and asked them the momentous question: "What must I do to be saved?" Not *temporarily*, as some suppose, for he has discovered that in a temporal sense he is in no danger—but, "What must I do to be saved" from sin and hell? In order to this salvation, two things were necessary—repentance and faith. But Paul, seeing the jailer already penitent, answered him in the language of the text: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

I. We shall inquire what are the prerequisites to a belief on the Lord Jesus Christ; and as the first in importance should always be first in place, it is necessary,

1. That Christ shall have died for him in a saving sense, or with a sincere purpose to save him; nor do we suppose that he died for any man from a less worthy motive. It will already appear, therefore, that all are in circumstances, so

far as his death is concerned, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for "he that believeth *not* shall be damned;" and we cannot suppose that he will be damned for unbelief, unless the blood of Christ was sincerely tendered to save him.

2. He must be enlightened and awakened by the Holy Spirit in order to such a belief; for we could no more see and appreciate the offers of mercy without this Spirit, than we could see to read without light. This Divine Spirit, however, leaves every one without excuse; forasmuch as he enlightens every man that cometh into the world. He is omnipresent—everywhere exerting omnipotent energy for the salvation of all men, so far as he may do so without violating the laws of that grace by which mankind are governed. So that he may truly say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" All men, therefore, are capable of believing, so far as the office of the Holy Spirit is concerned.

3. He must be a repenting sinner. Such was the jailer upon the occasion before referred to; for it is certainly impossible for an impenitent sinner, unreformed in his practice, so to believe as to be saved, as it is impossible for him to be saved in his sins. But as God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, we suppose, and we think justly, that if they are not penitents they might be and ought to be; and that for this reason, so far as the light shines to them, they shall perish. We conclude, then, that all may so repent as to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

4. It is necessary that he be a man of sufficient sense and

reason to investigate the subject, and weigh the evidence in favor of such a belief. It is not expected of idiots or infants to exercise the faith here required; all men, therefore, who have sense enough to be lost, have sense enough to be saved, if this gift be properly exercised; and surely none will attempt to excuse their irreligion by saying they are mere idiots, and incapable of understanding the subject for themselves. We think, therefore, that as far as this qualification extends, all men might become religious.

5. It is necessary in order to this belief that a sufficient amount of testimony be furnished him in favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, the object of faith. This testimony has been given him of God in all ages of the world; and a confidence in exact ratio with this testimony has been, in all ages, the faith required. When our Saviour appeared upon earth, he wrought all his miracles for the purpose of so establishing his Divine character as to make it reasonable for the people of that day to believe on him. Before his advent there had been several pretenders to the Messiahship, who had gained many followers; but time, the only true fortune-teller, soon revealed that they were mere impostors. They were put down and their followers scattered; so that when Christ came, the people were afraid of another imposition. These miracles, however, balanced the scale of testimony, so as to leave that generation without excuse for their unbelief. They were also continued in the Church during its infancy for the same purpose. But when stability was given to the cause, and time had decided in its favor, these miracles were withdrawn, lest the scale of evidence should be overbalanced,

and the world be forced to a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, which would destroy the moral worth of faith. But now that Christianity has stood the test of eighteen long centuries, passed through ten Pagan persecutions, and thousands of others from Papal Rome, and stands yet, the "gates of hell" not being able to prevail against it; and that millions, having experienced its practical utility, add their testimony to the cloud of witnesses in its favor, to be an unbeliever against all this weight of evidence, is to be condemned with a punishment more dire than that of Simon Magus himself, who lived in the days of the apostles, when there was far less evidence in favor of Christ and his religion than there is now. All men, then, have sufficient evidence to induce them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We conclude, upon the whole, that every man is in such circumstances to believe as to leave him no excuse for unbelief. But there are various helps to this belief: such as reading and studying the Holy Scriptures, and other books that are calculated to help him in understanding the Scriptures; for the more he learns and knows of God, the better he understands his revelation, and the more readily will he confide in his promises. We think the labor thus bestowed will be amply repaid, since the measure of faith he possesses is to mark the degree of the other graces of the Spirit; and since also it is true that "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John v. 4. Now if we pray as the disciples did—"Increase our faith"—we have but to employ diligently the means that lead to its increase, and expect in the use of them the answer to our prayer. But

if we expect our faith to be increased without the use of these means, we are enthusiasts—looking for the end without the means. You may just as well expect God to fill your crib full of corn without either planting or ploughing, as that he will increase your faith without the means through which that increase is to come.

II. We consider the act of believing. This is a simple act of the mind—so simple, in fact, that no definition of it is found in the Scriptures. Indeed, none could be given, as nothing can be plainer than the thing itself. It is simply relying upon promises with confidence in him who promised, or, in a word, acting as if the promise were already fulfilled. But we may take occasion here to remark, that just where eyesight ends, there faith begins. It is a confidence in things not seen. We believe in God, but "No man hath seen God at any time." When we reverence him, worship him, and pray to him, we add works to our faith; and by works is faith made perfect. See James ii. 22. We believe also that there is a heaven only when we practice those virtues that God has said he will reward in heaven. We believe there is a devil only when we resist him, as God, who says there is a devil, has told us to do. And when we shun those vices which God, who says there is a hell, has told us he will punish there, then, and not till then, may we be said to believe that there is a hell. In short, we take all these invisible things upon the authority of God who reveals them to us, and govern ourselves accordingly. Indeed, there is nothing more evident than the truth of St. James's doctrine, that "faith without

works is dead." For instance, suppose that your house were on fire: would a strong belief of that fact go any further towards putting it out, than to prompt you to use proper exertions for doing so? And would not he be considered a madman who should sit idly down and undertake to put it out by simple faith? Although God is able to preserve his house, is it likely he would do so while the man is making no exertions whatever to extinguish the flames? Or suppose your ox had fallen into a ditch: would you appreciate my help to get him out, when I did no more than pray the Lord to help you out with him? So, then, you yourself being judge, if you believe what God has said, you must act accordingly. This is the simple acting out of faith on your part; for faith is a rational exercise of the mind; and as you could not have confidence in the friendship of a neighbor when you knew that your conduct was offensive to him, so you cannot have rational confidence in the friendship of God when you know that your conduct is displeasing to him. This affords a pleasing theme for our contemplation.

III. "Thou shalt be saved." Salvation from sin and its punishment is the great end and aim of all the provisions of mercy vouchsafed to our race. It simply means *deliverance.* Deliverance implies a state of bondage from which to be delivered. God has, irrespective of conditions on our part, for Christ's sake, delivered us from the guilt of original sin. Christ wrought for us on Calvary a deliverance from personal transgressions, which he now offers to us by simple faith in his merits. But this faith implies repentance and reformation—short of which we see not how it is possible for

us to be delivered. The word "saved" in our text means, we think, deliverance from the guilt of that sin which the jailer felt to be a grievous burden when he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" To have that guilt and burden removed is certainly no ordinary blessing. But salvation does not stop here. It proposes, through the operation of the same faith, to deliver us from the power of sin. For the apostle says, Rom. vi. 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." That is, when our passions and appetites crave that which is sinful, we have the power given us to conquer those passions and appetites so as not to commit sin. It further proposes to deliver us from all sin. For we have the assurance, 1 John i. 9, "That if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrightcousness." This is what we call a full salvation. Next it delivers us from the fear of death. For while "the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," we may have "the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and consequently not be afraid to die. Millions of Christians professing this salvation have died triumphantly; and if one fact is worth a hundred arguments, this fact ought to be in the way of every sinner who dares to live in unbelief. But, finally, this faith is able to save us with an "everlasting salvation" in heaven, and bless us with all that heaven is.

All this, and a thousand times more than we are able to tell, may be realized by exercising faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and acting accordingly. Then, in conclusion, we would exhort you to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," that you may be saved.

SERMON VIII.

SANCTIFICATION.

SERMON VIII.

SANCTIFICATION

"Create in me a clean heart, O God."—PSALM li. 10.

PERHAPS no man in this life ever experienced a greater variety of fortune than did David, the supposed author of the Psalm from which our text is taken. In early youth he was a poor shepherd's boy who kept his father's flock, and so little thought of in the family, that when Samuel came to the house of Jesse to anoint one of his sons to be king over Israel, all his brethren were made to pass before the prophet; and it was not till they had all been rejected that David seems to have been thought of; and not then till the prophet inquired of his father if he had not another son. To be raised from a shepherd's tent to the throne of Israel, was a great change of circumstances; sufficient, indeed, to put the good sense, much more the grace, of many men to the most severe test. After a series of twenty-four years of the most severe trial, and many displays of the Divine power in his behalf, he is at last brought to the throne. But a still greater change than this is found in his experience. He tells us in the fortieth Psalm that the Lord heard his cry,

took his feet out of a horrible pit of miry clay, and put a new song in his mouth, "even praise to our God." This was a change infinitely above the former. But, after all these distinguishing blessings, he falls from his high estate of favor with God, and is guilty of adultery and murder—two of the worst crimes that disgrace human nature—crimes too bad for a heathen, worse for a Jew, insufferable in a common Jew, much worse in the King of Israel—horrible for a common king, how much worse for this Christian king, who so lately sang upon the rock! He has slid off that rock into the mire, deeper perhaps than we may ever suppose. But, fortunately for David, there was in his realm one faithful old prophet; and that prophet proved to be worth more to him than all the rest of the men in his kingdom. He came to him with a simple narrative of a poor man who had one little lamb that he prized above gold, and of a rich neighbor who had many flocks and herds, but who had parsimoniously spared his own flock, and taken the poor man's lamb to set before a guest. David at once pronounced sentence of death upon the man who had acted so unjustly. Now comes the point to try Nathan's faithfulness. Will he reprove the king? Does he not know that his life is in the king's hands? How many smooth-tongued preachers of the present day, if they had so great a man as David for their auditor, would faithfully reprove him? Alas for this man-fearing age! I fear there are many who would rather seek popularity through his favor, at the expense of God's message of truth. But Nathan did not hesitate. He said at once, "Thou art the man!" and with this terrific sentence

aroused the slumbering conscience of the king, and wrought his soul up to the highest pitch of horror. He is awakened to a sense of his guilt, and repents. And while thus awakened and repentant, he is said to have written this Psalm, in which he significantly cries out, in the language of our text, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" In view of the most important service rendered to David in this instance by the faithful prophet, you will allow me the following sentiment: Condemn me to the pestilence, the famine, and the sword, provided you save me from the influence of a preacher who would strew my path to hell with flowers, and help me to get there—who would flatter instead of faithfully reproving me. Whatever becomes of me in this life, let me get to heaven when I die, and all is well. But, in order to get to heaven, we must have a clean heart; for heaven is a place of purity, and nothing unclean can enter there. It was a want of this purity that led David to his fall—a want of it that pollutes society here, and peoples hell hereafter.

I. We will inquire what we are to understand by the word heart in our text. We think the word here has reference to the passions of the human soul collectively. When these are wrong, the effect is uncleanness; but when these are all set right, the sinner is cleansed from the error of his ways. Now love may be said to be the queen of these passions, and, therefore, may be said to have a pretty direct control over the others. When our love is fixed on a wrong object, as was David's in the case before us, we occupy the most dangerous ground possible. The great command,

upon which the law and the prophets are hung, is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. But where is the man without religion that does this? Then our hearts are grossly unclean by nature; nor can we possibly be happy in this state of uncleanness.

We cannot be said to be fully cleansed, even after we get religion; for the apostle has said, 1 Cor. iii. 1, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." He arrives at a knowledge of their carnality, (verses 3, 4,) from the fact that there were divisions, envying, and strife among them: one saying, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos. If this was proof to the apostle of carnality, he might find an abundance of it at the present day. But you, who profess religion, have you never, since the day of your conversion, felt any thing of anger, malice, revenge, hatred, love of the world, or any of all the host of moral pollutions which infest human nature? You are ready to answer, "I have been troubled with these more or less every day." Then you need a clean heart, and may well say Amen, when David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" Though you may not have sinned so grossly as David did, yet a clean heart is as indispensable to you as it was to him, or as it is to any one else.

II. We regard the terms sanctification, Christian perfection, and a clean heart, as being used synonymously in the Scriptures. The attainment of this state is the great end of all the dispensations of Divine mercy. And we may truly be said to be on the Lord's side, when we are advocating the doctrine which makes it attainable; for God cannot

look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, neither does this doctrine. Indeed, the Bible itself would be suspected as to its origin, were this doctrine not fully taught therein; and however much it may rear the standard of Christianity above our heads, let us never be guilty of the meanness of attempting to pull that standard down to suit our Christian stature, but rather have a holy ambition to rise up to it, as far as possible! Now all denominations agree as to this doctrine, except some differences as to when it shall take place; and these differences only grow out of our ignorance in this dark and sinful world. But all agree that heaven is a place of purity; hence all look for a clean heart this side of heaven. But in what does sanctification consist? The Apostle Paul has explained it in the following words, 2 Cor. vii. 1: "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." That is, in the danger of losing it and falling back into sin again—from which danger no man is free during this life. And if we must be so cleansed before we die, this is the day before we die, and why not urge the plea for it now? This leads us to consider,

III. The means by which this state is attained, which is simple faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But faith which looks to a future period of time, may look to a time that will never come to us. Therefore, in this case, that is no faith at all which looks to any other time than the present; as we have no evidence that we shall live to-morrow. Then, as this is the case, why not believe now? "But hold," says one,

"I cannot believe that so great a blessing can be so readily obtained. I shall have to weep, and fast, and pray a long time yet before it comes." Then, my brother, you are leaning, in an unjustifiable way, to works rather than to faith. You are going to work on that old heart a long time yet, before you will consent to have a new one created. If the blessing ever comes, you will be an unworthy recipient of it. You are but unworthy now; and as you are to receive it upon the worthiness of another and not your own, and as you may die before to-morrow, why not urge the plea to receive it *now?* But if you should not die so soon, you will be better able, in the possession of this blessing, to glorify God; since you will then be able to say, "As he is, so are we in this world." 1 John iv. 17. You agree that sanctification is a good thing. Then why not believe that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly?" And besides, if you go to sleep again without the blessing, you run the risk of being lost, as you are now too unclean to enter heaven, and Christ says it is his will, even your sanctification. All that is wanting, then, is to get you willing. Then of course all parties are willing, except the devil and sin. But do not let them cheat you out of so great a blessing, as you are told not to "give place to the devil."

IV A word to those who would seek this blessing. Like all other blessings, men are apt to look the wrong way for it. John Wesley, who was as far-seeing as most men of his day, when he sought this blessing, looked to be elevated by it far above the world; but, to his astonishment, when it

came it sank him into the lowest valley of humility, and he found his will wholly lost in the will of God. He fell into nothing, and God in Christ was all in all. Perhaps many may have professed this blessing who have mistaken the nature of it, and, when filled with an ecstasy of joy, really thought it was sanctification; but have afterwards found that they still had a will of their own, and a stubbornness about them which was hard to control. They may have found themselves afterwards as easily excited on the various topics that concern the world, and as little able to "endure hardness as good soldiers," as others who had not made this profession. I would address all such in the language of the Apostle St. James, "Do not err, my beloved brethren," especially at this point.

We suppose all Christians are not only willing but anxious to do the will of God; if so, they need not be at a loss to know that will. For St. Paul tells us, 1 Thess. iv. 3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication." The apostle here strongly indicates that sanctification is a needful blessing for us in this world, the want of which well-nigh proved the overthrow of David, the author of our text.

Indeed, it is very strange that, knowing God's opposition to sin, any of us should be willing to live below that attainment which would free us from its dominion. I am fully persuaded, moreover, that God will prosper any Church or denomination in proportion as their prosperity shall advance this doctrine in practice; and that no Church whose ministers shall cease to insist upon this attainment, and thus

stand opposed to all sin, can possibly prosper—unless it be supposed that God will prosper that which fosters sin. Then let us, if we wish our party to succeed, believe this doctrine, live this doctrine, and enforce it with all proper zeal upon others; for then, and not till then, shall we be truly on the Lord's side. If my observation does not deceive me, the Methodist denomination were a more spiritual people in the days when this doctrine was more frequently and zealously insisted upon than it is now. Then let us, my brethren, at least with regard to this particular, come back to the old landmarks. On the rise of the Methodists in Virginia, I am told that it was predicted by a far-seeing man, though he was not a member of their communion, that God would prosper that people, for the reason that they made no allowance for sin: which prediction has proved true, and very certainly for the reason he assigned. But now, if we make allowance for sin, and indulge persons in our Church who pray not at all that we know of, who drink drams, and go to balls, and other places of amusement prohibited by the rules of our Church, and show no symptoms of true repentance, then God can no longer prosper us, unless he look upon sin with at least some degree of allowance. Indeed, our prosperity under such circumstances would not be for the general good. The doctrine in question is so little insisted on at the present day, that I am in favor of the General Conference putting into the Discipline a law requiring preachers in charge to preach this doctrine to the people at least once a quarter—humiliating as such an act would be to the ministry themselves. Humiliating, I say; for the passing of such an act

would prove to the world that there is an inclination to shrink back from this doctrine, which is, and of right should be, the glory of all Churches.

The best method of encouraging our faith in seeking for this blessing, is, like the author of our text, to pray for it. Earnest, anxious, faithful prayer is the only way to attain it, and to secure ourselves from temptation. "But," says one, "has not the apostle said, 1 Cor. x. 13, that 'God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it?' And, according to this statement, how is it that David fell under temptation? Why did he not bear it?" This seeming contradiction is easily reconciled. God did not make himself accountable for David's unfaithfulness. He had provided a way in which he might be able to bear this temptation, by making it his privilege to have a clean heart. But the temptation came, and found him without a clean heart, and he fell. His fall, then, was his own fault; as he had fallen short of what it was his duty to have been. So, likewise, will every one fall under temptation, if that temptation finds him without the grace which alone can enable him to resist it—and that grace is sanctification. And now, my brother, I would simply say to you, neglect it at your peril! For, if you neglect so great a salvation as sanctification, you will not escape, but will certainly fall in the hour of temptation. Then, when you pray for sanctification, pray for an immediate bestowal of the blessing, as the future is not yours; and no opinion of what God will do

for you to-morrow is any part of faith, but mere presumption. But believe and pray for it to-day, that you may be the better able to live to-morrow. And whatever evils in the future may be yours, you will then have grace to meet and overcome them. But, in order to pray for this blessing aright, you must be willing to give up all sin without reserve; for if you "regard iniquity in your heart, the Lord will not hear you." Psalm lxvi. 18. But one more prerequisite to successful prayer in this respect I must insist upon, at the risk of being tedious; and I cannot express it in better terms than Christ himself uses, Mark xi. 25: "And when ye stand praying, [especially for sanctification,] forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Heavenly Father may also forgive you your trespasses." This is especially important in seeking this grace. For while you have enmity in your heart against any human being, the blessing you ask can never be yours. But if all this is cast from you, and you have no reserve of sin in your heart, then there is nothing in the way of the blessing but your own obstinate slowness of heart to believe. This must also be removed; and when it is, the blessing shall be yours, and the Lord enable you to keep it faithfully until death.

SERMON IX.

ON HUMILITY.

SERMON IX.

ON HUMILITY

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."—JAMES iv. 10.

EVERY department both of Church and State has its leading virtue; or, in other words, that virtue in the absence of which all other qualifications are useless. For instance, in the military department the leading virtue is courage; for whatever other qualifications a military man may possess, if he want courage, they avail him nothing. In politics the leading virtue may be consistency, for aught I know—I do not profess to understand politics. But I think I know that in religion the leading virtue is humility; and whatever else a man may have of religion, so called, if he lack humility, his other endowments will be unavailing.

Humility, therefore, may well be enjoined in the very plain language used in our text. Indeed, all the leading characteristics of religion are revealed in very plain terms in the Scriptures. This, then, is so plain a text as to require no explanation; I shall, therefore, only attempt to enforce upon my own mind, and the minds of others, the importance of that virtue in our holy religion which, however plainly

revealed, is very hard to practice; inasmuch as humility is the very reverse of human nature in every instance of it. And when we consider that every disposition of our nature is at war with this grace, and every feeling of our hearts opposed to it, we may well deem this enforcement necessary. This greatest of all Christian graces is neglected, alas! by but too many professors of religion. But where is the man sufficiently endued with humility to be able to step forward with a lesson of it to his brethren? How arduous the task! But still the enforcement of this virtue must be attempted, which may be done by the following considerations:

I. We should be followers of Christ in those points where he became an example for us. He says: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matt. xi. 29. These few words embrace all that is imitable in the Divine character. Now if we were required to follow him in some external rites and ceremonies of the Church, where we might still retain a hook to hang human pride upon, he might have many followers. But, alas for poor proud-hearted man! he is required to follow Christ down into the valley of humility; and though the waters of life themselves meander through this lowly vale, still every feeling of his nature is opposed to the descent thither.

We may further be instructed as to Christ's example in this particular by referring to Phil. ii. 7, 8. The apostle there brings to view, first, the heights from whence he descended; and says that Christ, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." And

then, to show all the depth of his humility, further says, he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And now, if to be "found in fashion as a man," without any of those pollutions which disgrace humanity, Infinite Wisdom deemed a sufficient cause for humility, how much more should we, who are but men, nay, worse, sinful men, humble ourselves "in the sight of the Lord!"

II. Dependent beings should be humble in the sight of those on whom they are dependent. An exhibition of pride and ingratitude on the part of dependent beings towards their benefactor, is generally admitted to be the worst feature of human nature. For instance: suppose a fellow-creature were dependent on you for all temporal good, and, in order to avoid the inconvenience occasioned by his continual demands, you give him a pretty large supply at once; whereupon he assumes an air of independence, becomes high-minded, stiff-necked, and is even above speaking to you, his benefactor! Now imagine that you see him, with all these airs, walking by you. How does he appear in your eyes? I guess, from my acquaintance with human nature, he will get no more supplies from you. And if God were no better than yourself, he had long since cut off your supplies; for you have behaved haughtily and with a proud carriage towards him, and have disregarded him through his cause as it exists in the world around you. How gracious is the Lord, that you are not cut down as a cumberer of the

ground—as unworthy of further bestowments of his bounty! But still you live because of his merey and long-suffering; and I advise you speedily to mortify that ungrateful pride of yours, and hasten to his feet, lest he swear in his wrath that you shall not enter into his rest. You may well be exhorted by the Psalmist: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." For you are not only dependent on him for all temporal good—for life itself, with all its train of blessings—but for all spiritual good also. He is the only medium of good from heaven to earth; and all the hopes and prospects of the next and eternal world are to be obtained through him. Then hasten to "humble yourself in the sight of God."

III. We will get along mueh better through life by being humble, than by indulging that spirit of pride whieh is the reverse of humility. Methinks I hear one say, "Prove that faet, and I am your man, for I wish to get along well through this life." In order to do so, we will first quote from Mr. Boston, a Presbyterian, perhaps, who wrote a book entitled, "The Crook in the Lot," founded on a text in Proverbs, which says: "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Man's lot in life he represented under the figure of a horizontal pole, just the height of his shoulder, so construeted that he eould turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but was obliged to go straight forward underneath it. The erook in his lot had reference to the providence of God in bringing to pass those things which were eontrary to man s will; and

was represented by a crook in the pole, inclining downward towards the ground. Now suppose him to come up against one of these crooks—for in the providence of God his will will often be opposed: which would be the easier way, for him to stand stiff and stubborn against that crook, or to stoop under it and go forward? The answer will be readily given: To stoop and go forward, certainly. According to Boston, then, we will get along much better through life by being "of an humble spirit with the lowly."

This subject is also very finely illustrated in a book compiled by Bishop Asbury, "The Causes and Cure of Heart and Church Divisions;" in one part of which man is represented as travelling a narrow street, crowded with people, each intent on pursuing his own business. Now if he stiffen himself up against every man he meets in the street, the proud spirit thus exhibited will soon beget in others a like disposition, and he will be compelled to fight his passage through. But the more successful way of getting through this street is, to give way and pass his fellow-travellers, instead of fighting them out of his way. This idea precisely corresponds with the words of the wise man, where he says, "Only by pride cometh contention." St. James also says, "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Could this hydra-monster be cast out of man, then every evil work would be destroyed; and as it is obvious that contention and evil works make up the sum of our misfortunes in this life, it is better to be without that pride that produces them.

I once heard a minister, while preaching on the subject of

forgiving others their trespasses against us, make the following remark: "Every man has merits with men, none before God." He represented those merits under the figure of a ring which every man is allowed to make around the place where he stands. "Now," said he, "if you make a large ring—that is, lay large claims to respect from society—others will possess the like ambition, and make their ring large also, and by that means it runs into the territory of yours. Hence arise nine-tenths of all the trespasses committed one against another; not, indeed, real trespasses against what we might humbly claim of each other, but against our pride, that claims too much." He advised us, therefore, to make an humble claim—a small ring—and when society granted us even more than we asked, we would be agreeably disappointed, nor have our pride mortified, as, on the other hand, it would necessarily be. Our Saviour has brought this subject to our view under the idea of a feast or wedding. We quote his own beautiful and impressive language: "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, 'Give this man place;' and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, 'Friend, go up higher;' then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." Who can doubt, then, that we will get along much better in this life by being humble? And as we have made this out so plainly to be the case, let us

hasten to humble ourselves "in the sight of the Lord." But you will remember that the text requires us to humble *ourselves*. If a man be humbled, he is disgraced; if he humble himself before men, he is a coward; but he is to humble himself "in the sight of the Lord," on whom he is dependent. And if he do not thus humble himself, the Lord will certainly humble him to the lowest hell, to his eternal disgrace.

IV We will now proceed as far as possible to detect human pride; which was so detestable, even to John Wesley, that he said of it, that it broke all the measures of his patience. It is a monster of such frightful mien as to hide itself as far as possible from the observation of men. Hence the variety of opinions as to its whereabouts. One locates it in dress, another in a high head, a peculiar style of conversation, etc.; but, to get a sure view of its location, we will take the stand-point of religion. But one is ready to ask: "Can a man be proud of his religion, which should be the very reverse of human pride?" Witness the Pope of Rome, sitting in the chair of state, with the triple crown upon his head, while emperors and kings are bowing to kiss his toe, and ask yourself, To what height can human pride be augmented before it will sink under its own weight? Witness all those Churches, in a word, who claim to be the only true Church, and fancy that they enjoy peculiar blessings, growing out of Church organization or peculiar mode of baptism, and that all others are only right in so far as they approximate to their standard.

And now we have brought to view the sure marks of

human pride. These rites and ceremonies of the Church, with various modes and forms of worship, are the great bones of contention in the religious world; and Solomon says, "Only by pride cometh contention." I think, by this time, you are ready to admit that pride can show itself even in religion, which is the opposite of all human pride.

V "He shall lift you up." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Christ has said, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." And to the humble it is said, "He shall exalt you in due time;" which we suppose will be the right time. Do not, therefore, be impatient amidst your present sufferings and humility. Infinite Wisdom will judge of the proper time for your exaltation; and "he shall lift you up," if you remain humble until that "due time" comes. And then how pleasant to be lifted up! Many are the roads taken and the plans tried by ambitious men to be lifted up into high office among their fellows; and too often, alas! they have committed the vilest crimes in order to attain this object. Some have scrambled up to thrones, as Pollok expresses it,

> "—— dyed in human gore,
> And steeped in widows' tears."

What a pity that men with immortal souls, capable of being lifted up to heaven, should thus forfeit all for earth! But let the humble follower of Christ take courage, and deny himself all worldly ambition; for in "due time" he shall be lifted up to a crown and a kingdom "that fadeth not away."

SERMON X.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

SERMON X.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—MATT. xxii. 11, 12, 13.

THE persons of this parable are wisely chosen for the purpose of presenting to our minds the idea of a sumptuous feast; as none would be apt to make a more sumptuous feast than a king, and a king would be likely to excel all other feasts on the occasion of the marriage of his son.

I believe it is universally admitted that this parable represents the gospel feast; and if so, it is strange that so many Christians have for so long a time overlooked one feature of the parable, viz., that the feast was provided for persons who never tasted it. And yet they tell us that all for whom Christ died will be saved; which is a direct contradiction of this feature of the parable; for among the Jews who were first bidden, there were many thousands who would not come. Even after all the pains taken to send for

them a second time, by a more argumentative set of servants, who were to argue the point with them, and urge upon them the costly preparations of the feast, still they made light of it, and went their way, each in pursuit of his secular business, and did not come to the gospel feast at all. But we cannot suppose, after all this painstaking to get them there, that the invitation extended to them was insincere. Indeed, our Lord makes it a prominent point in the parable, that the Jews might have come to the feast of the gospel, but they would not. On other occasions, also, he frequently presented this obstinacy and refusal as the cause of their destruction. Who can read his lamentation and weeping over the city of Jerusalem, without either supposing that he was willing to save them, or was guilty of duplicity in thus weeping over them? We must believe, therefore, that Christ died for the Jews with a view to save them; and yet, for their obstinate rejection of him, he tells them plainly, "Ye shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." John viii. 21. They were not saved, therefore, and never will be, Universalism to the contrary notwithstanding. But among the Gentiles who were called in after they had refused to fill their places at the wedding feast, there was found one without a wedding garment, whose case we will now proceed to consider.

I. We will first show wherein this man without a wedding garment was like the other guests. And,

1. They were alike in their invitation. We think the invitation was as sincerely given to this man as to any of the others. Were you invited to a wedding, and could

know that you were not as welcome as any other person invited, you might justly feel yourself insulted; but no such insult is chargeable upon Him who invites us to the gospel feast. Indeed, the idea that God would make mock offers of grace to any of the sons of men, is at once revolting to every sense of justice. They were therefore equals in their invitation; and if so, down goes the foolish notion of a common and an effectual call of God. Although it is true that the calls of mercy and offers of grace, with all the privileges therein contained, will increase the turpitude and enhance the misery of those who finally reject them, still God was not willing that they should perish, but that his goodness in these kind offers should lead them to repentance. And if he chose to increase the light, and multiply his goodness towards them, though the final rejection of all these offers should increase their condemnation, who shall say that by these offers he intended to increase their misery? It is right for us to suppose that in this he acted wisely; for by increasing the light, and extending his goodness to them, he will, on one hand, increase the probability of their obedience to that light, in which case they shall be saved; and, on the other, leave those who disobey it without any excuse for their obstinacy and rebellion.

2. They were alike in their attendance at the feast. This man, together with the others, had come to the feast, not like those obstinate rejecters who would not come; that is, as we think, he had joined the Church and was found among the followers of Christ. The king himself called him "friend." He was a friend to the cause, and had

likely contributed as largely to support it as the other guests. He is but the representative of thousands in the various branches of the Church. They have joined the Church, and are not unfrequently flattered into the opinion that they have religion, because they desire to have it: they want to get to heaven, they hate what they once loved, and love what they once hated, and now love the people of God to some extent, and desire to be with them, and really are members of the Church with them.

II. We shall now attempt to show wherein this man was unlike the other guests. We find but one thing in which he was unlike them; but one thing was lacking, so far as it is brought to view in the parable, and that was that they had wedding garments, and he had none. This defect was not detected until "the king came in to see the guests. He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." As all agree that the wedding garment in this parable represents religion, the servants could not be judges as to whether he had religion or not. The practice of one man, or set of men, undertaking to decide for another whether he has religion or not, is an attempt to do the work which the Holy Ghost alone can perform. It is one part of his great errand in the world, "to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." Now any earthly tribunal that attempts to do this work for him, will feel ashamed and speechless before him in a coming day. The servants were not reprimanded in the parable for failing to find out the fact that this man "had not on a wedding garment." The king, however, soon discovered the fact when he came in;

and how many thousands, who are now members of the Church, will be found in the same condition when He who discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart shall come to scan us, we are not now able to say.

III. We shall notice the consequences to this man, growing out of this difference between him and the other guests. While there was but one point of difference between them, that one point was an all-important one. They had religion, and he had none: a difference, this, wide as heaven and hell. And let it not be lost sight of that this man is the representative of all who are in the Church without religion. Now before the king came in, he passed among his brethren, perhaps, respectably. He may have told as fine a story, when interrogated on the subject of religion, as any of them; and perhaps frequently quoted to himself, with regard to the other members, that they were "righteous overmuch." For his part, he was not an advocate for those rapturous feelings often manifested by his brethren. He may have thought himself too much of a philosopher to be a partaker in such excitement. When the king came in and fixed his eye upon him, even that may have flattered him to suppose that he was very worthy of notice. But he soon found, in the penetrating glance which was turned upon him, his great mistake. The king spoke to him in a very friendly manner: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? And he was speechless." Now we suppose that they all came to the feast without wedding garments; for it was a custom among Eastern kings to provide such garments for their guests. They were not ex-

pected to bring them from home, or to find them on the bushes as they came along. But after they arrived, the other guests secured wedding garments from the king's wardrobe, which this man neglected to do. Now it is right, according to the parable, for persons to join the Church as seekers of religion; but it cannot be right that they should continue in the Church and neglect to get religion. If ever a man needs the aid of society, it is while he is seeking religion; but how many thousands are now in the Methodist Church alone, who, joining as seekers, have no religion to this day, we cannot tell. I wish the General Conference would pass a law to keep those who join as seekers on probation until they do get religion—for a longer or shorter time, as the case may be. For it is a well-known fact that Church membership alone will not save a man without religion; or, as it is called, "the wedding garment." But, "he was speechless." Therefore he had no excuse. His want of religion was his own fault. He might have obtained it; and that fact alone condemns him. And it is equally true of every one of Adam's race, that if he die without a preparation to meet God, at his own door lies the blame. He neglected that preparation which should have been made, according to the means and mercies extended to him.

Next he is apprehended. "Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away." Whereas he once boasted of his freedom—would not sign the temperance pledge because he wanted his freedom; said he might be toled, but could never be driven; always delighted in doing as his pleased—now "bind him hand and

foot;" let him enjoy his freedom no longer; and "take him away." Take him away from among my people; from among those guests who respeeted my preparation. Take him away, who ventured to judge for himself, irrespeetive of my requirements; who ventured to have a will of his own, in opposition to my will; and who verily thought he knew what was best for himself; who dared to think for himself, even when his thoughts were in opposition to my thoughts; who had favorite theories of his own, eontrary to the doctrines I taught him; and who interpreted my words of truth to suit those theories. Take him away from the Church; from the people he loved to assoeiate with; from the means of grace; from the ehance of repentanee; from all hopes and prospects of future happiness; from every thing that ean afford him pleasure; from all that he loved and held dear in the world. But methinks I hear the servants inquire, "Where shall we take him?" The answer eomes back in tones of terror, "Cast him into outer darkness." Throw him beyond the solar system; sink him so low in hell that a sunbeam will reaeh him no more for ever. But again I hear the servants inquire, "What kind of a plaee is that? for it is so dark down there that we see it not." Again the answer eomes baek, like the fearful thunders of Sinai, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What a dreadful deseription of the place into which he is to be cast! I have seen men miserable—have seen them with delirium tremens, who imagined that they saw evil spirits come to drag them away, and whose eountenanees were distorted with fear and horror; but never did I

have so awful an idea of hell as when, on one occasion, I visited a man in this condition, who had tried to kill his father and mother, and had shot at his wife while escaping from his house. O, the fearful horrors that were depicted upon his countenance! If there is any worse hell than he seemed to feel, may the Lord deliver us all from it! Yet he was not so miserable as to gnash his teeth. Then there are worse horrors than he felt—for "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And then, how solemn the thought that this miserable condition was about to be his, from the single fact that he "had not on a wedding garment," though ample provision of a wedding garment had been made for him. And that garment, too, the finest adornment that has ever graced the human form since its exile from the garden of Eden into this dark and sinful world. After all the pains taken to invite, persuade, and entreat him to accept the garment thus provided for him, he deliberately chooses to weep and gnash his teeth for ever, rather than wear it. Neither does he do this ignorantly. He has every reason to believe that religion alone fills a vacuum in the higher qualities of man's nature, and completes his bliss; that religion alone secures to him the highest enjoyment of which he is capable, and without which no man ever was, is now, or ever will be happy.

This man and his class are the most unfortunate beings of Adam's race. They bear the reproach of Christ in part, being identified with Christians in their membership; deny themselves and take up their cross in part, so far as to

retain their membership in the Church; and then, neglecting to get religion, shunning so much of the cross and self-denial as its enjoyment would add to what they have already done, live and die in the Church without religion. And while such a one is being sent off to heaven by the preacher at his funeral, and the paper of his Church, for the consolation of friends left behind; behold! the servants of the King are pitching him headlong from the high eminence of Church privileges, into the deep abyss of that outer darkness where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

And now, in conclusion, let me solemnly ask, not whose Church you belong to, not how you were baptized or by whom; (for the thief went from the cross to heaven, without being baptized at all;) but let me solemnly ask, Have you the wedding garment? Have you religion? And are you striving with all diligence to wear that wedding garment, not as a Sunday coat, but do you keep it on all the time? For the more constantly you wear it, the more it will adjust itself to your shape. There is great danger that you will pull it off and lay it away; in which case it will be worse for you than if you had never had it on. But above all, are you keeping this garment "unspotted from the world?" It will last you for ever, and shine the brighter the more constantly you wear it, if you do but keep it pure through that blood by which it was first cleansed. I therefore exhort you, first, to get it, and then, "as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" as to keep it faithfully until death; and nothing is more certain than that "you shall receive a crown of life."

SERMON XI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SERMON XI.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"This do in remembrance of me."—LUKE xxii. 19.

THE Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Divine appointment, whose object, as seen in the text, is to keep in memory the sufferings and death of Christ as a sacrifice to atone for our sins; and also to furnish proof to men of all succeeding ages, whose duty it will be to believe on him, that Christ lived and died for us. His death and sufferings are hereby kept in remembrance, and doubtless will be till his coming again. Great importance, therefore, is and should be attached to the observance of this ordinance. We propose to ask and answer several questions with regard to it, which we deem to be very important ones.

I. Who has a right to administer this ordinance? This question is important from the fact, that if I have no right to administer it, you have not neglected your duty in refusing to receive it at my hand; but if I have a right to administer it, and you refuse to take it, you have denied the Lord that bought you with the price of his blood. In receiving it at my hand, therefore, you have a right to believe, at least, that

I offer it to you by Divine appointment; and hence the importance of the question before us. It is conceded by all, that Christ authorizes those sent by him to preach the gospel to administer this ordinance. This might settle the question at once, but for the difficulty of knowing, at this late day, who they are that are sent by him, as there were to be many false prophets in the world, according to his own prediction. But by adhering strictly to the instructions given at this point in the New Testament, we will find them sufficiently plain to satisfy us. If the doctrine of succession from the apostles were true, then there would be no more difficulty in the question; but Christ himself has put his veto upon that doctrine, in his Sermon on the Mount, Matt. vii. 16. He does not say that by the regular imposition of hands ye shall know the true from the false prophets, but says expressly, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." And without repudiating other denominations in the least, we will select the Methodist Church, and bring them to the test given in this rule. What has been the fruit of the Methodist denomination from its first rise until the present day? Have they been instrumental in awakening sinners? and have those awakened sinners turned from sin to holiness? Have they produced any specimens of holy living and happy dying? Have they contributed a share to check the flowing tide of sin in society? Have they been instrumental in causing drunkards to become sober men; swearers to become praying men; liars to becomes men of veracity; and rogues to become honest men? If all these questions can be answered in the affirmative; if all these grapes and figs

have been gathered from them, it follows—if Christ could tell the truth—that they are neither thorns nor thistles: "For the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." 1 Cor. ix. 2. How can any man suppose that false prophets, who were doubtless sent by the devil, would produce such fruit? For if, being sent by him, they produce these fruits, then Satan is divided against himself. With regard to their being regularly ordained in a succession from the apostles, we ask, Did God retain the right to call preachers, or delegate that right to the Church? If he retained that right to himself, he was certainly not bound to a regular line of succession; and that he retained it is clear from the fact that he said, Matt. ix. 38, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." He did not say, Pray ye *the elders of the Church* to send them; and as Melchizedek and Jesus Christ were instances of a departure from a regular succession, it is clear that we are not to know them by succession, but by their fruits.

This fruit, so far as the Church we are considering is concerned, has been abundant from the very beginning of their ministry; and as a bad tree could not bring forth such fruit, we come to the safe conclusion that Methodist ministers have a right to administer the Lord's Supper. Then it follows that if they have a right to administer the Lord's Supper, and you have refused to take it because it was offered by a minister of that denomination, you have sinned every time you have done so; for, after all, you are to take the sacrament, not so much on account of faith in the preacher, as faith in Christ. When we take it with faith in

men, we are to that extent worshippers of men; and when we take it with faith in any particular denomination, we are to that extent worshippers of that denomination. Were I to offer the sacrament in a Christian community, and refuse the right to receive it to all except the Methodists, then I should set myself down as a worshipper of Methodism. But I have never so worshipped Methodism, and hope I never may. If any denomination of Christians, who have done good in the world in preventing sin and promoting the cause of Christ, offer me what they call the Lord's Supper, I will receive it in remembrance of him, not of them.

II. Whose duty is it to take the sacrament? I answer that it is the duty of the whole of Adam's race. As it is an ordinance instituted to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, and he tasted death for every man, every man ought to take it; and he who is not in circumstances to take it, because he is out of the Church, and living in the commission of sin, is just as guilty of denying the Lord that bought him, when he fails to receive it, as any one else. But,

III. Whose privilege is it to take the sacrament? I answer,

1. It is the privilege of all who believe the divinity of Jesus Christ. For those who do not believe him to be God ought not to worship him, as they must necessarily do in receiving this ordinance.

2. He should be a member of some Church living under moral government, and who hold the doctrine of Christ's divinity. For if his Church believe not this doctrine, he is departing from the faith of his Church if he receive it at all.

3. He should be an orderly member under that moral government, so that there are no charges lying against him.

4. He should be charitably disposed in his feelings towards those who are taking it with him, in respect to all other doctrines, apart from the divinity of Christ, in which he may chance to differ from them. If he have faith peculiar to himself with regard to smaller matters, let him have it to himself, before God. We shall not challenge him for his peculiar notions at the Lord's table. Much less would we condemn him here on account of mode. If he, being a stickler for mode, will not kneel down to take it, we will give it to him sitting or reclining, as he may think best. And were I to refuse it to him on account of the mode of his baptism, I should never claim to be respected by an intelligent community.

5. He should feel his own unworthiness. We are unworthy of all the blessings that God ever bestows, whether we feel it or not; and should, on this solemn occasion especially, feel that we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under his table. But how can that unworthiness be properly felt by those who refuse the ordinance to others, who may be superior to them in every respect, on account of some external ceremonies in which they do not chance to agree?

6. He should partake of this ordinance under strict self-examination. The apostle has said, 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." This examination should be conducted, as far as possible, with severity to ourselves and

charity for others. But in order that a man may examine himself, it is necessary that he should have some standard by which to measure himself. That standard, in every instance, is the Scriptures. But, alas for us! we all have our favorite theories, to which the Scriptures are made to bend; so that our own standard at last becomes the one by which we are apt to examine ourselves. The most inexcusable of all these standards of human prejudice, is that one which looks mainly to an external preparation for this ordinance: such as succession from the apostles, peculiar Church organization, and last, and least of all, a mode of baptism. But no external preparation whatever can fit us worthily to receive this ordinance; and whoever receives it with no higher preparation than these give him, will eat and drink unworthily. It is internal preparation that is absolutely necessary in order that we may partake of it acceptably before God. That internal preparation requires us to be honest in our purpose; that is, not to eat and drink for the base purpose of insinuating ourselves into the good graces of others, nor on account of a relish for the elements, but simply to remember Christ, and what he has done and suffered for us. It further requires us to be liberal in the opinions we entertain of others; and, above all, to partake with a confiding faith in the merits of him whose death we commemorate, accompanied with a determined purpose so to square our lives by his word as that we may trust in him for salvation; for it is surely madness to trust in Christ for salvation while we are living in disobedience to him.

We think, furthermore, that an earnest seeker of religion

should have a right to partake of this ordinance. That point, however, will mainly depend on whether such a seeker should be allowed to become a member of the Church. We decidedly think that if ever a man needs the aid and watch-care of the Church, it is while he is seeking religion. If he can get religion as well out of the Church as in it, then why not keep it as well out of the Church as in it? (especially if he cannot lose it.) And if it is clear that such a one ought to be admitted into the Church, it is equally clear that he ought to be allowed the benefit of all the means of grace in that Church. That the sacrament has been a means of grace to thousands, is capable of proof by many witnesses. I have heard preachers and other good Christians say that they obtained the pardon of their sins while at the sacrament table as seekers of religion. And besides this, an earnest seeker is far from being an unbeliever. He hates sin as much as any other man; Christ's atonement is as precious in his esteem as in that of any other man; he feels his own unworthiness as much as any other man; and, in fact, he has all the qualifications above enumerated. Then let him come and seek through these symbols for that blood which is to wash his sins away.

IV With a few brief objections to close communion, we close our subject.

1. A capital objection to close communion is, that it lays the foundation of tyranny in Church government; for if you convince me that I can have the sacrament nowhere but in your Church, then of course I will bear all the tyranny you can lay upon me, rather than be deprived of privileges in

the only true Church. I know of no Church holding close communion which is not tyrannical in its government. For instance: every Church that holds that doctrine, within my knowledge, holds also that there is but one way out of the Church, and that is expulsion. They will not allow a member in full standing to withdraw from the Church. He must suffer the odium of expulsion to get away at all. Who does not see the tyranny of such a measure? Again, they will bind him to the law of close communion contrary to his own conscience; and a tyranny over conscience is a great tyranny indeed. Then, again, he is not allowed the freedom of speech; for if he speak against the action of the Church in the expulsion of a member, he is obliged to take it back, or be expelled for it. And all this tyranny over the right of freedom of membership, over conscience itself, and over the freedom of speech, or the free expression of an opinion, is girded on with the monstrous surcingle of *the only true Church!* Hence, if you do not submit to it all—and as much more if necessary—you are in no Church at all; for "the temple of the Lord are these." Jer. vii. 4. But,

2. Close communion supposes infallibility in the decisions of the Church where it is held. For were they to acknowledge the possibility of being mistaken with regard to Church organization, they could not then have the face to reject all others, who, in every other respect, are as good as themselves. To be consistent with close communion, therefore, they should claim infallibility; for they certainly ought to know that they are right when they say to others, "Stand by, we are more holy than thou!"

3. Close communion looks too much like the Pharisee that Christ told us of, who thanked God that he was "not as other men." It looks too little like the religion of Christ, which humbles a man, and causes him to esteem others better than himself. And, finally, it looks like a denominational supper and denominational worship, instead of the Lord's Supper and the Lord's worship. Therefore no Church holding close communion can gain my confidence.

SERMON XII.

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT.

SERMON XII.

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain."—1 Tim. vi. 6.

In the preceding verses of this chapter the apostle seems to have looked on our present abolition movements, and gives a very graphic description of them. He says: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke [of bondage] count their own masters worthy of all honor." This broad expression, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," evidently includes all servants of every kind that have masters. But why should they count those masters worthy of all honor? "That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." For the name of God and his doctrine are blasphemed wherever this is not the case. "And they that have believing masters, [Is it possible that Christians ever owned them? So it certainly appears;] let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit" (of their labor.) That is, Christian masters will lay out the benefit of their labor more to the glory of God than others. "These things teach and exhort. [Observe

here that the apostle is pointing out to his son Timothy the things that he should teach and exhort.] If any man teach otherwise, [All abolitionists to a man plainly teach otherwise. But what does he do who teaches otherwise? The apostle goes on to say,] and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, [Is it possible that he departs from all these in order to teach otherwise? It is awfully true. But what causes him to do so?] he is proud, [a most fearful charge,] knowing nothing, [another heavy charge,] but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: [that is, contending about politics and finances—things of this world—instead of preaching religion both to the bond and the free, and enforcing the duties of their several relations as the Bible directs:] from such withdraw thyself." The following is the only comment which we shall offer upon this last expression: Thank God for the division of the Methodist Church!

The apostle, after using the strong and forcible language found in the verses quoted above, subjoins the words of our text with a disjunctive; as if he had said: "Though gain is not godliness, yet 'godliness with contentment is great gain.'"

I. We propose in the first place to explain what is meant by godliness; or, as some would term it, God-likeness. To be like God is to have his image. The image of God implies the likeness of our Saviour, so far as the traits of his

character are imitable; for there are certain traits in the character of the Saviour which it is impossible for us to imitate, nor are we required to do so. It becomes us then to know wherein we are to imitate him. This important point he has settled himself; for he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Godliness, then, signifies meekness and humility. When we have these, we have godliness; when these are wanting, we are unlike God. But to be more particular: meekness signifies the patient endurance of unmerited evils at the hands of others. For instance: Moses is called the meekest man that ever lived. And why? Because on one occasion, when he had been called into the Mount Sinai to receive the law at the hand of God, having sacrificed all the wealth, honor, and pleasures of Egypt purely for the good of his countrymen, and thereby brought them under great obligations to him, on returning from the mountain, he found that they had gone into idolatry—had made a golden calf, and were holding around it the first audacious ball of which we have any account—thus destroying all the prospect for good that had cost him so dearly. It is true that, in the first moment of irritation, he cast down the tables containing the law and broke them; and had he persisted in this spirit, he had never been called the meekest man. But we see him, on the same day, walk off from the camp of Israel, and, prostrating himself before God, pray for the people who had so recently injured him. God then appeared to him and theatened to destroy all that people, and raise up from his own family a people to inhabit the promised land. But Moses, though it was natural that

he should wish to have his own family elevated, insisted that God should spare the people of Israel, urging as a plea his previous promise, notwithstanding the great injury they had done him.

And now, how much of your religion is of that sort that can suffer for well-doing, and take it patiently? Suppose some neighbor had done you a serious injury, and you had got the upper hand of your evil nature sufficiently to drag yourself off to the woods to pray for him, upon the same day in which he had thus injured you; and that the Lord, who has a right to dispose of all his creatures, should appear to you on that occasion, and tell you that he would destroy all the family of your enemy, and give their possessions to your children: have you that sort of religion that would prompt you to beg the Lord not to do so? I fear not; but that in many instances you would say, "Do, Lord; he deserves to die." Or what if the Lord should appear to a bigoted Methodist, and tell him, "I will destroy all the Calvinists, and let yours be the only Church:" would he insist on him not to kill them? Or suppose he were to appear to J. R. Graves, of Nashville, and tell him that he would kill all the Methodists out of the United States: would he insist on him not to do it? Would he weep between the porch and the altar, and ask God to spare them? Such, if he did, would be the true spirit of godliness. But if in any of the above instances they fail to pray for their reputed enemies, their religion will profit them nothing in a day to come. I have sometimes heard preachers and others pray that God would bless them and their friends, and *pity* their enemies: thus telling

God upon their knees that they were right and their enemies wrong. I would much rather hear them pray that God would bless their enemies and pity themselves. There would at least be a little more humility in such a prayer; and meekness and humility are characteristics of godliness.

Our Saviour possessed this spirit of meekness in an eminent degree. He bore all that a wicked world could heap upon him with a spirit of meekness and compassion, and prayed for them even while they were pouring their contempt upon him. How little is this like most of the religion of the present day! And yet none are godly but those who possess this spirit. Stephen, the first martyr, who prayed for his enemies while they were stoning him to death, and all the martyrs also who fell under the persecutions of Pagan and Papal Rome, exhibited this spirit of godliness; and if all the professing Christians of the present day possessed it, the heathen and infidel world would not long stand before them. But, alas for Christianity! it is far otherwise. A want of this spirit is injuring our cause among the heathen; and is so exhibited in Christendom as to foster and promote infidelity among us to an alarming extent. But "if one would mend one, all would be mended." Then let every professor of religion cultivate this spirit with all possible diligence, if he would save himself and others; and let him know that if he do it not, he is not only preventing his own happiness, but the happiness of all under his influence.

II. The contentment which is to accompany this godliness alludes wholly to temporal things, as may be easily seen

from the context; for the apostle says in connection with the text, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;" which fully explains the meaning of the word contentment as here used. But here we have a difficult task to perform; for it is very hard to draw the line up to which self-love is a virtue, and beyond which it becomes a vice. It is certainly a virtue while it is kept in its proper bounds, since it is said, "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is right, then, that a man, ordinarily, should work for himself and his own household in preference to others. But if, on the other hand, he "seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him," it is said that the love of God does not dwell in him. In this case his self-love becomes a vice. Should a man professing religion, because he is not to love the world, fold his hands together and say, "I will not work for my living, and if I starve to death I will only get to heaven the sooner," he would certainly violate every principle of virtue as well as of self-respect. No one would regard such a man as a Christian, for the Scriptures require us not to be slothful in business; and a heavy sentence is denounced against the sluggard. If we expect the end—that is, temporal supplies—without the use of the means, we are enthusiasts. We conclude, therefore, that the godly man should employ all the honest means in his power to obtain temporal good; and having done the best he could in this respect, he is to be perfectly contented with his success. So far as God blesses his efforts, he is to be

thankful; and if he blast them, he is to be satisfied, confident that God will withhold no good thing from him.

Mr. Wesley's rule on this subject is the best I have ever seen. It is this: "Make all you can honestly; save all you can by economy; and then give all you can to proper objects." After you have done this, and are contented as to the result, casting all your care upon God, you are no enthusiast. And remember, while you are giving all you can to the poor and needy, you are but laying up treasure in heaven, and so working for yourself after all. But, as may be easily seen in the preceding remarks, while the lazy man lays up no treasure on earth, so likewise he does not lay up any in heaven; nor do we conceive it possible for him to be contented with himself or any one else. He is usually envious of those who are more prosperous than himself, and attributes his condition to "bad luck"—as he calls it—when it is easily seen that his "bad luck" originates in his own conduct. Indeed, it would require a suspension of the laws of nature to put him in a better condition; for I have never seen or heard of a good lazy man's country; nor do I suppose heaven itself to be such. I will close this part of the subject by advising all those who complain of "bad luck" to follow Wesley's rule as quoted above, and their "luck"—as they call it—will soon change for the better.

III. We will consider the gain of godliness with contentment. All financiers love to count their gains. We will count ours; and,

1. We will notice contentment itself. A poet has said:

"The only circumstance in life
That I could ever find
To soften cares and temper grief,
Is sweet content of mind:
With this in store, we have much more
Than wealth could e'er convey."

And if there is a being in this world of woe who is contented without godliness, I know nothing of the philosophy by which he is made so. If, then, contentment belongs exclusively to the godly, how great is the gain of godliness! That it is the only solace in grief, is evident both from Scripture and experience. After the godly man has done the very best he could do under the circumstances which surround him, then to be able to feel contented and reconciled to his lot, affords an enjoyment which none but the godly know, and which beggars all description. He has not, therefore, as some suppose, to wait until he arrives in heaven for all his enjoyment.

2. He gains religious enjoyment also, which constitutes a bliss to which the rest of the world are strangers, and which has made men happy under the most severe sufferings known to earth's history. Religious enjoyment, like the running rill, ever supplies peace and joy to the heart of the Christian; for as all the inventions of man cannot prevent that rill from running to the ocean, so the world, the flesh, and the devil can never prevent the godly man from experiencing this enjoyment.

3. He gains a happy death. Though such a one should "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," he fears no evil; for the sting of death, which is sin, is withdrawn,

and he dies triumphantly. Now men will die whether they are godly or ungodly; a triumphant death, therefore, is a clear gain of godliness. So may you live, and so die.

4. He gains heaven. Christ says, "He that overcometh shall sit with me in my throne." And further, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." But we shall not here make the vain attempt to describe heaven; since our best description would but slander it—would be a hell compared to it—for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And now, in one word, we gain all that is real happiness in this life, a joyful and triumphant death, and, in the end, heaven, with all that heaven is.

SERMON XIII.

ON PRAYER.

SERMON XIII.

ON PRAYER.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—HEB. iv. 16.

THIS text is grounded upon a very cheering fact, that is, "that we have a great High Priest that has passed into the heavens," and who intercedes for us there; and one, too, who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In a word, because we have such a High Priest who intercedes for us at the throne on high, "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." But before we urge the proposition of the text, we will first notice, for your encouragement, the consoling promises connected with our coming.

I. 1. That we may obtain mercy. The Psalmist has said, Psalm cxxx. 4, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." But for the merciful forgiveness to be obtained in coming to a throne of grace, we could not dare to approach; any more than a Jew would dare to touch the mountain of Sinai while Moses stood on its top amid the rolling thunders. But the fact that we shall obtain

mercy should greatly encourage us to come. Suppose you were condemned to die by the law of the State, and a petition was gotten up for your reprieve: what an anxious interest you would take in the words, "obtain mercy!" But how infinitely more should you be interested, when the mercy sought is to reprieve you from the fire that never shall be quenched! And not only to reprieve you—which is but a negative blessing—but to crown you a king and a priest to God, and to bring you safely into the kingdom prepared for you, with the assurance that you "shall go no more out!" How large the blessing sought! And can you feel indifferent as to your success in seeking it? Can you ask for such large enjoyments without feeling an all-absorbing interest in the result of your petition? If so, then there must be a great deal of hardness in your composition. But presuming that you will feel a solicitude becoming the largeness of the blessing, we notice,

2. The words, "find grace to help in time of need." Although every time is, in some sense, a time of need with us, yet we think the text refers to those special occasions of difficulty and distress in our history when none but God can help us. But it is a law with him that those who serve him in youth, health, and vigor shall be delivered in the hour of affliction and distress. This law is expressed by the Psalmist, Psalm l. 15: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And also in Psalm ix. 9: "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." It is further stated, Psalm xxvii. 5, "For in time of trouble he shall

hide me in his pavilion." And the wise man has said, Prov. xi. 8, "The righteous is delivered out of trouble;" and also, in Eccl. xi. 8, "But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." But the same law further reveals, that if a man serve not the true God in health, youth, and vigor, when the days of severe affliction shall come, and when, in this time of great need, he shall call upon that God whom he has not served, and who alone can help him, God will tell him, Isa. lvii. 13, "Let thy companions deliver thee." And, while he sends all such to the gods they have served for deliverance, he says, Ezek. vii. 19, "Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord." From all which it appears that if you would have Divine assistance in times of special need, you must not serve your companions, your silver, nor your gold before that time comes; else you will have to depend on them for help, and you know that they cannot help you. Therefore serve God now, that you "may find grace to help in time of need."

II. We now proceed to urge the proposition of the text, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." In doing this, we would inquire, 1. Will God give us any thing if we pray, that he would not give us if we prayed not? For we are not to be induced to pray merely because it is a rule of the Church of which we are members, or that we may be considered religious by our neighbors, or to keep peace with our preachers. Nor would we pray as a certain poet—

"I pray that God, who all things sees,
May swift roll on his high decrees,
And undisturbed affairs also,
That the elect God's grace may know.
But nothing does my prayer effect—
It does not help the lost or 'leet;
For God's designs, throughout the whole,
Will for man's prayers no swifter roll."

For if I am to pray merely that I may meddle with God Almighty's affairs, or in a dictatorial way, then I for one shall pray no more. But while there are many blessings given alike to the prayerless and to those who pray, still we think that all the blessings of salvation from sin here, and its punishment hereafter, are given only in answer to prayer; and that there are blessings which the prayerless never did obtain, and we may fairly conclude never will. We may remark also that the blessings obtained by prayer are those which God alone can give, and which, as we have already seen, he gives only to those who pray; for prayer itself is a spirit of dependence and supplication for that without which we cannot be happy, and which we know can only come from God. But even these blessings may be asked without success under the following circumstances:

1. The Psalmist says, Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." No mental reservations can be made before him, for he knows what is in man. In order to be heard, we must be willing to give up all sin. 2. When we pray as the Pharisees did, to be seen (or heard) of men. Matt. vi. 5, and xxiii. 14. That hypocritical prayers are unavailing, is obvious to all. 3. When we pray that the blessing may be consumed on

our unlawful desires, James iv. 3: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts." And we may here remark that no man can ask amiss, in the sense of this text, when he asks for spiritual blessings. He may ask amiss, however, in temporal things; and God, who is all-wise, may withhold them in mercy. As, for instance, when we pray for rain in times of drought, we either may or may not ask amiss. In fact, if every man's prayers for temporal blessings were duly answered, then every man in this money-loving world would soon be rich; but "the poor ye have always with you," is a saying not to be gainsaid. 4. When we indulge an unforgiving spirit towards those who we suppose have trespassed against us. In that beautiful form of prayer taught us by our Saviour, it is said, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." Therefore, unless we bring a forgiving spirit with us, we need not come to a throne of grace. And now, if you find that none of these hindrances are in your way, you may "come boldly to the throne of grace." But there are three things that make prayer *rational.*

1. That which God gives us in answer to prayer, and which the prayerless cannot have, is indispensable to our happiness. Therefore we may well pray, if, like all other men, we desire to be happy. 2. An ardent desire for the things we ask. No man acts rationally who prays without an earnest desire for that which he asks for. Though he may utter the most sublime prayer of which language is capable, while his desires, like the fool's eye, are wandering off on other things, he is not rationally engaged. But if an ardent desire

prompt him to ask, he is not easily denied. 3. An expectation of receiving. For no man acts rationally when he asks God for a blessing which he does not expect to receive. And if expectation in this case, as in all others, is prompted by the experience of past favors, and the promises made by Him to whom prayer is made, how can he fail of expecting to receive when he comes to "the throne of grace?" For he has abundant proof, from the history of the past, that God has given every thing that is good to those that ask him. He has never "said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain;" and if we could at once know the history of all the prayers answered in past time, how strong would be our expectation of receiving! But with the free invitation to come to the throne of grace, there concur many cheering promises of success. Christ himself said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," and, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you." When you come to the throne of grace, therefore, come expecting to receive, unless some of the barriers stated above intercept your approach. But there are four things that make prayers successful.

1. Faith—which is simply a confidence in the promise of God. And how can we fail of that confidence? Consider the term in our text, "throne of grace." What an expression! Suppose there could be an earthly prince so rich that the more he gave away to his subjects, the more he would have to give; and to accommodate them all he had erected a pyramidal throne, with steps on every side leading up to his seat, and with many servants around whose business

it was to descend with answers to the petitioners at the foot. And suppose that in six thousand years he had never denied a single petitioner, except when his wisdom detected that the applicant was asking to his own injury—and his invitation was that all the ends of the earth should come and receive supplies. This would, in a temporal sense, be a throne of grace. Now would any man fail to have confidence when coming to such a benevolent being for supplies? Nay, he would doubtless bring the vehicle in which to carry the supplies to his home. How much more confidence should we have when coming to Him who sought our good when we were enemies to ourselves! And how can we fail to have faith in Him who is the benefactor of all, and who is more willing to give than we are to receive! Christ turned away the petition of but one man while on earth; and he asked for temporal blessings, even that his brother be required to divide the inheritance with him. Now Christ, by answering that petition, would have constituted himself a civil officer, thus uniting Church and State. But he indignantly refused, saying, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" But none who ever came to him in a proper spirit, asking for spiritual blessings, were turned empty away. Let us come, then, with the boldness of simple faith! Nor need we fear a delay under the law of "first come, first served," as with earthly benefactors; for in an instant he can bless all that come to him. Nor will he delay a moment longer than is necessary to bring us to a proper frame of mind to appreciate the blessing. We may always be confident, when we "ask and receive not," that we "ask

amiss." And we should be just as thankful when we receive not as when we receive; for negative blessings are as necessary to our good as positive ones. A failure, therefore, should never for a moment stagger our faith; we should still feel confident, with Dr. Young, that

> "Prayer ardent opens heaven; lets down
> A stream of glory on the consecrated hour
> Of man in audience with the Deity."

2. To make prayer successful, we should pray with importunity. Christ taught us this lesson himself, by representing the case of a man who should come to his friend at midnight for loaves: "Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." We are also taught the same lesson in the case of the poor widow that came to the unjust judge who neither feared God nor regarded man, but who, rather than be annoyed by her, avenged her of her adversary. But we have a still more striking illustration of this point in the case of the Syrophenician woman, who came to Christ beseeching him to cast the devil out of her daughter. She was first discouraged by the silence of Christ, then by his reply to his disciples, "I am not come but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But notwithstanding these seeming discouragements, she falls at the feet of Jesus, and still urges her petition; nor is she yet discouraged when he tells her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs," but replies, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from

their master's table;" and, as a reward for her importunity, receives the blessing which she sought at his hand. What an encouragement is this to urgent, importunate prayer! And are these the lessons which Christ, who sits upon the throne of grace, has taught us? And shall we come fearing or doubting that he will rid himself of us in any other way than by granting the blessing we ask? Yet, if he tarry, wait for him; but wait importunately, for he is the better judge when to bless us.

3. We must pray with solicitude. And shall all the world put us to the blush on the score of solicitude? Shall they be more zealous and anxious to get their favorite petitions passed through legislative halls or the courts of kings, than we are zealous with regard to the salvation of our souls? We may learn the importance of solicitude from the case of Bartimeus, a poor blind man, who "sat by the wayside, begging." Doubtless he had heard of one Jesus of Nazareth, who could open the eyes of the blind. And methinks he laid it up in his heart, and said, "Who knows but that he may pass this way at some time, and open *my* eyes, and I shall yet see the light of day?" And sure enough, at length a crowd came passing by, and, inquiring anxiously, he heard that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." It was a moment too full of interest for him to think of Jewish etiquette. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" And when they rebuked him for his loudness, he cried the louder still. Jesus stopped. And, methinks, if he had been on his way to make another world, he would have stopped when this

poor sinner cried to him so vehemently. On being informed of his desires, he readily opened his eyes, and granted him all that he wished. These blessings would never have been bestowed, but for the anxious solicitude with which they were sought. And I here recommend you not to pray at all, rather than pray with lukewarm indifference; for, considering the largeness of your petition, such lukewarmness is totally senseless and out of place.

4. You must come with a forgiving spirit. As we have touched upon this point before, we say but little about it here; but assure you, that if you come with proper faith, proper importunity, proper solicitude, and with a forgiving spirit, heaven and earth may pass away sooner than you shall fail of success.

III. It is usual on this subject to treat of the different kinds of prayer, such as public prayer, private prayer, ejaculatory prayer, and family prayer; but as we are so amply instructed on all of these, we shall forbear to enlarge on any of them except family prayer. Since there are so many members of the Church who not only neglect family prayer, but even argue against it, and go so far as to deny that there is any authority for it in the Bible, a few remarks on this subject may not be amiss. In the first place, family prayer is strongly indicated in Jer. x. 25: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the *families* that call not upon thy name." Now unless they called upon the name of God in a *family capacity*, they could not be said to be a family that called upon his name. The example of David, who prayed evening, morning, and at

noon in his house, is a further indication of family prayer. But the apostle has settled the question in 1 Peter iii. 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." And now I ask, Can any man fail to see that it must be family prayers that would be here hindered? since no little bickerings between a man and his wife would hinder either from private prayer, at least in so strong a sense as it would hinder family prayers. But all that we have quoted, or can quote from Scripture on this subject, are but indications of the duty. It certainly need not require a *command* to influence a Christian to set an example of pious devotion in his family; for he must have a very unfeeling heart indeed who, professing Christianity, yet does not feel for the spiritual welfare of those who are near and dear to him by the ties of nature. Perhaps, therefore, it was not thought necessary to give a command in this respect, as the Christian would certainly care for those of his own household. How can any professor of religion be willing to die and leave his children in this world of sin, having never heard him pray? We could never have predicted the fact of the neglect of this duty, if we had not seen it neglected. But still, we feel certain that every Christian parent is in favor of a family altar. He must feel the importance of the duty of family worship, even though he may neglect it; and we suspect that this neglect arises from a want of moral courage sufficient to enable him to

take up the cross. We will close this subject by using the exhortation of the Apostle Paul in the concluding remarks of his letter to the Ephesians, Eph. vi. 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

SERMON XIV.

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

SERMON XIV

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS.

"Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."—Acts x. 34, 35.

It was an opinion generally held by the Jewish nation that none but Jews would be saved; and that they, happening to be the children of Abraham, would be saved unconditionally. The disciples long cherished this opinion; and they seemed to be strengthened in it when the Saviour sent out seventy disciples to preach, forbidding them to go to any but "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not until the circumstances connected with our text had transpired, that Peter was converted from this opinion. Christ had said to him, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And we think our Saviour here had reference to the circumstances before alluded to; for it will be remembered that the calling of the Gentile nations was a matter of great importance. The circumstances were

these: Peter, having fallen into a trance while hungry, saw a vision of a great sheet let down from heaven, wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, and heard a voice saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." But he refused, because the beasts were such as it was not lawful for a Jew to eat, saying, "Nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth." But God told him not to call that common which he had cleansed; and Peter afterwards acknowledged that God had convinced him by this vision that he should call no man common or unclean. While Peter thought on the vision, three men called for him who had come from the house of Cornelius, and the Spirit told him to go with them, nothing doubting, for that he had sent them. But still he took with him six of his Jewish brethren, probably as witnesses. Upon his arrival, Cornelius told him that he had sent for him because that, as he prayed in his house, an angel in bright clothing had stood before him, and commanded him to do so. Then Peter, comparing this vision with the one which he had himself seen, is fully convinced of the great truth which the Lord had intended to teach him, and utters the language of the text. But he was very soon summoned to trial before the Church in Jerusalem for preaching to the Gentiles; for it seems that, though he was converted in this particular, his brethren there still held the doctrine of partial salvation in favor of the Jews. But Peter, on his trial, rehearsed to them the circumstances of his visit to the house of Cornelius, telling them that as he began to speak, "the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning,"

and concluded his defence by saying, "What was I, that I could withstand God?" The Church then ceased to prosecute the case further, but "glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Here it is clear that Peter strengthened his brethren in the great truth of a free salvation to all the nations of the earth; or, in other words, that "God is no respecter of persons."

That God is a respecter of persons in a temporal sense, is a fact that has been recorded upon the face of society in all ages; but that there is a sense in which he is no respecter of persons, was a new doctrine to the whole Jewish nation. We shall attempt in the explanation of our text to treat of these two points at large, and then inquire, What is required of us in order that we may be accepted with God?

I. God is a respecter of persons in a temporal sense. He "hath made of one blood all nations," and yet what a difference has he made between individuals! Take, for instance, a man possessing an intellect of the highest order, and one who is the least gifted in this respect of Adam's sons, and compare them together. Though God has made them both of the same dust, one is made capable of filling offices of honor and trust, while the other is too low intellectually to be of any use whatever in society. We have here a full explanation of what is meant by one vessel being made to honor, and another to dishonor. All the grades of intellect in society were made by him; for it is said, 1 Cor. iv. 7, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Clearly showing that it is God who makes these differences. He makes a difference among men also in the filling of high and

honorable office. In Dan. iv. 17, it is written: "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." It is God, then, who "putteth down one and setteth up another." But it appears that it is not their goodness that influences him to do so, but probably some purpose of his providence to be revealed in the future. Such was at least the case in his raising up Pharaoh to be King of Egypt. He also preferred Jacob to Esau in a temporal sense; (see sermon on Predestination;) and there were many blessings vouchsafed to Jacob's family in the train of that preference. It is in a temporal and political sense that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. ix. 18. In fact, all the texts usually quoted by those who hold a doctrine contrary to that in our text, are plainly referable to temporal things.

It is evident also that God never intended that all men should be alike with regard to the wealth of this world; for Christ says, "Ye have the poor always with you;" but we do not know that there has ever been a time when none were rich as to this world's goods. Let it be admitted, then, that God is a respecter of persons in a temporal sense, and it by no means surprises us that Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, should argue this point so strongly as he does in his Epistle to the Romans. But let no man, because of the difference made among men in this respect, be tempted of Satan to believe that God ever gave one man a better chance to get to heaven than another; for it is contrary to his holy nature to do so. He requires of each according to

that which he has given him, which brings them all, in a spiritual sense, upon a level.

II. We notice the sense in which God is no respecter of persons. We often meet with men who are good citizens, good scholars, and of good moral character, who say that they believe the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation, because they find it revealed in the Bible; and that they also believe that man is a moral agent, and accountable to God for his conduct, because they find it revealed in the Bible. In a word, they believe both Calvinism and Arminianism, for they find both revealed in the Bible; though they acknowledge that they can never reconcile the two doctrines. I have heard ministers of the Calvinistic school examined for ordination, who professed to believe both these doctrines, and thought they could reconcile them; but the labor of centuries has failed to produce such a reconciliation—simply because one is true and the other false. And is it not passing strange that men will suppose plain contradictions to be revealed in the Bible, and profess to believe them? It would not be more preposterous to suppose it to be revealed in the Bible that black is white, and white is black. God can never reveal contradictions. Those passages which prove Calvinism to them, are the few that speak of God as a respecter of persons in a temporal and political sense, and form no offset whatever to the great truth, that in a spiritual and eternal sense he is no respecter of persons. We will now sustain this position by quotations from Scripture. 2 Chron. xix. 7: "For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking

of gifts." This is a charge given to the judges of Israel, in which iniquity, respect of persons, and taking of gifts are ranked together. Rom. ii. 11: "For there is no respect of persons with God." Eph. vi. 9: "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." Col. iii. 25: "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons." James ii. 9: "But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin." (How prevalent is that sin!) But to save the trouble of quoting individual passages, we refer you to the entire Bible, when properly understood, as an exhibition of God's mercy and willingness to save all our lost and apostate race. Whoever is lost, therefore, can charge his destruction on none but himself; for such are the provisions of mercy, that he cannot lay the blame on the sin of our first parents, on Satan, on the depravity of his nature, nor on the society of his fellows; as none of these had power to keep him away from Christ. If God, then, is no respecter of persons, it follows that he is just as willing to save you, bad as you are, if you will turn from sin and come to him, as he was willing to save Peter, the author of our text. Though he did not give you the talents of Sir Isaac Newton, or of Benjamin Franklin; nor the office of General Washington, or Queen Victoria; nor the wealth of the Rothschilds; still he is as willing to save you in heaven as any of these, if he is no respecter of persons, and our text assures you that he is not.

Peter speaks of this as a great truth which he had just

discovered; but, happily for us poor Gentiles, it was true, whether Peter had discovered it or not. Upon this great truth the preacher of the gospel is untrammelled. He can extend to every sinner the invitation to turn and live. He knows that God has passed by none, or he had passed by him. Indeed, it would be ungenerous in one poor sinner to accept of salvation as a favorite of a party, he being as bad as any of them; but if God stands ready to save all the rest of his race, upon the same terms that he saves him, then there is no want of generosity in his accepting this salvation, though others reject it. But why should we labor longer on a point so plain as this? "Of a truth," then, we "perceive that God is no respecter of persons." But the latter part of the text brings us to our third and last proposition.

III. "In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The Universalist tells us, that if God is no respecter of persons, and ever saves one sinner, he will save all. Now if it were true, as he thinks, that in the great work of his salvation man is a passive being throughout, this conclusion would also be true. But, unfortunately for him, the apostle discovered another truth in connection with the one above spoken of: that, in order to be accepted with him, they have, in every nation, to fear God and work righteousness. Now if all would fear God and work righteousness, then doubtless all would be saved, provided they should hold out faithful to the end. But, alas for a sinful world! how many are there who do not do this; though God, who is no respecter of persons, has given to all the ability to do so. We suppose that the

apostle here meant that each individual of each nation should fear God and work righteousness in proportion to the light that shines upon him in the nation to which he belongs; for God requires of none the improvement of any more than he has given him. The heathen nations, therefore, having not the written law, "are a law unto themselves." So far, then, as the Spirit writes the law upon their hearts, and no farther, are they required to fear God and work righteousness. But, says one, "Why then do you send missionaries to the heathen?" We answer, not to take them to heaven, any more than the preaching of the missionary would take you to heaven were he to remain at home, unless you obey the gospel; but we send missionaries to the heathen to civilize them; to take off the grossness of their superstition; and, by increasing the light that shines to them, thus to increase the probability of their obeying that light. For instance, we said to take off the grossness of their superstition—not to *cure* their superstition—for we are not well of it here. As it is, the wife is burnt on the funeral-pile of her husband. The gospel will be sure to put a stop to that, for it is not a practice among us, and we are safe in supposing that the gospel will do as much for them as for us, and no more. Again, they throw their children into the fire to appease the wrath of their gods. The gospel will cause them to quit this practice, for it is not a practice among us. Many of them throw themselves into the river Ganges. The gospel will prevent this, which alone would be worth more than all the money you ever contributed to the missionary cause. But, as we before said, besides civilizing and christianizing

the heathen nations, the gospel will increase their light, and thus increase the probability of their obeying it, though it will not compel them to obedience any more than it compels us.

We have so far illustrated Peter's doctrine that there is a chance for the people of every nation to be saved. Whether we send them the gospel or not, they can obey the light they have, and, so far as that light enables them to do so, may so fear God and work righteousness as to be accepted with him. John, in the isle of Patmos, saw people from all nations who had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," though the gospel had not then been preached to all nations.

We are told by some that there is a filial and a slavish fear of God, which may possibly be true; but we know that the Bible says of the wicked, "There is no fear of God before his eyes;" and that "God is not in all his thoughts;" and that it further says, "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil;" and that Christ says, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Here we evidently find what our enemies tauntingly call a hell-scare. But whatever a man may so dread in a course of sin as to influence him to forsake that course, is very likely the fear mentioned in the text. After he has forsaken his sins, and obtained forgiveness by faith, then, and not until then, is he able to work righteousness—to think right, speak right, act right, and live right; and then only may he be confident that he will die right. It is in this course of life only that man may feel his acceptance with God; and to be accepted

with him is a blessing of such magnitude that it would require volumes to express its greatness. The consciousness of this acceptance is worth more than all the labor and sufferings that Christians have ever endured; and were it possible for you to do and suffer them all in your own person, and then be accepted with God, you would be an infinite gainer.

SERMON XV.

ON BAPTISM.

SERMON XV

ON BAPTISM.

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."—MATT. xxviii. 19.

I. THE nature of Christian baptism.

1. It is a seal of the covenant of grace. And while this fact is admitted by most theologians, I wonder if they know what they are talking about when they admit it; for it was certainly the covenant of grace established with Abraham, for the apostle says the gospel was preached to Abraham, and that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, did not annul it; so that the covenant of grace established with Abraham continues from that day to this. But circumcision was the seal of the covenant when first established with Abraham; but since the Christian dispensation, baptism takes its place as the seal of the covenant of grace. Perhaps there are some who, when they find such consequences growing out of the admission of baptism as a seal of the covenant of grace, will even deny the fact itself. If they do, I have only to ask them whether the covenant of grace has any seal in these days? and please to tell us what it is. But,

2. Baptism is an outward sign of inward regeneration; a type of religion, an external symbol of it; for the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, agree in one. It is like the finger-post that points to the town; for while the one is not the town, so the other is not religion, but only a symbol of it.

3. Baptism is a door into the Christian Church, as we think; though this fact is doubted by some and disbelieved by others. But if baptism is not a door into the Church, as the Methodist Discipline evidently makes it, then by what ordinance or ceremony are persons received into the Church? I am sure that the three thousand converts who were added to the Church on the day of Pentecost were all baptized on that occasion. But we will not labor a point so generally admitted as the above.

II. The properties of Christian baptism; or, if you please, those particulars which, when they all meet, constitute a valid Christian baptism.

1. A proper administrator. A proper administrator, according to our text, is one called of God to preach the gospel. But how shall we know that he is called of God to preach the gospel? By simply inquiring, What did God want with a preacher of the gospel? Doubtless the Holy Ghost called in this little auxiliary, that, through men of like passions with ourselves, he might operate to the awakening of sinners, and bring them to repentance. Now we have only to ask, with regard to any branch of the Christian Church, the simple question, Are sinners awakened and brought to repentance through their instrumentality? and

do the after-lives of those sinners prove their repentance genuine? This, the apostle says, was the seal of his apostleship; and where this is the case in any branch of the Church, we may not doubt that its ministers were called of God to preach.

2. The second ingredient of Christian baptism is the ceremony found in our text, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," all here represented as being equals. Wherever this ceremony is not used, baptism does not exist, if we may rely on our plain text for its proper form. And I am sorry to learn that some of those who lay a great stress on water, have changed the ceremony of baptism to I know not what, departing from the explicit warrant in our text.

3. The third ingredient of Christian baptism is the element of water. It is remarkable that we have explicit warrant in Scripture for every property that really belongs to the ordinance. Peter said at the house of Cornelius, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" Many other passages might be brought in favor of the use of this element, but it is useless. Those three ingredients, therefore, are all that belong to the ordinance, as we think.

III. The subjects of Christian baptism. And,

1. We think that adult believers, who have already got religion, should be baptized, if they have never been baptized before. We have an example of this in the case of Cornelius and his household; and we think we have also another example in the case of St. Paul, though this is doubted by

some. One example from Scripture, however, is enough to carry our point.

2. We think that penitent believers who are not yet converted ought to be baptized. Although John was not of the Christian dispensation, yet he baptized unto repentance as the forerunner of it; and it is not likely that he would set up a practice that would not be admitted into the Christian dispensation. If this be granted, the case is settled; and penitents must be baptized, if they have never been baptized before. If baptism is a door into the Church, then certainly penitents ought to be admitted into the Church; for at this time they stand in peculiar need of the aid of society—the prayers and assistance of God's people—and should, therefore, be allowed all the privileges of the Church, and the means of grace, to aid them.

3. Infants ought to be baptized. And here, according to Edwards, lies the whole controversy with Anabaptists. We will treat them, however, with due respect, and, as we hope, with fair arguments.

1. God himself set up infant membership in the Church established with Abraham, and gave them the seal of the covenant at eight days old; and we are told that "what God does is for ever." No man may add to it, or annul it. Moses, as we have seen, did not annul the right of infant membership in the Church; and we have never seen where Christ did so. "But hold!" says one; "baptism imposes obligations on its subjects, far above the capacity of infants." But if you will examine the obligations imposed by circumcision on the infants of Abraham's family, under which

they were brought at eight days old, you will find those obligations as far above their capacity at that time, as those imposed by baptism. Then away goes that objection.

Our next argument is founded on our Saviour's own words, Mark x. 13, 14, "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." Now it will be remembered that God had set up infant membership in the Church; and now, in the midst of a crowd of people who had always had their infants admitted to Church membership under that authority, and the disciples themselves against the practice, our Saviour had a fair opportunity to annul this law, and take sides with his disciples if he could do so conscientiously. But instead of doing so, he manifested much displeasure at the Anti-pedobaptist views of his disciples, and uttered the language quoted above, among the thousands who were already favorable to the side he took. If he did not hereby establish infant membership in the Church, his language was well calculated to deceive, and has deceived thousands, both of Jews and Gentiles. But mark his language: "Of such is the kingdom of God." God has revealed to us three kingdoms—the kingdom of glory, the kingdom of grace, and the visible Church. You baptize an adult person because he says that he has religion, and belongs to the kingdom of grace. He may be deceived, and not have religion; or he may deceive you. But I baptize a child because Christ

says he belongs to the kingdom of grace. Christ could not be deceived, nor would he deceive me. And should he intend by the kingdom of God the visible Church, then of such is the visible Church. You can take the difficulty on which side soever you think you can bear it the easiest.

3. We think that infant baptism is strongly indicated in the history of baptisms found in the New Testament. We shall bring forward but one instance of this — the case of Lydia and her household. We are told, in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that she and her household were all baptized. Question: Were those of her household adults or minors? If it is admitted that they were adults, then we are compelled to swallow the monstrous absurdity of baptizing adult persons upon another's faith than their own. If they were minors, then infant baptism is pretty strongly indicated. There are other cases that might be named where households were baptized, but this one is sufficient. We think that any one who could get over what we have said on this point, might get over any thing, so we say no more.

IV As it has long been a custom to notice what is called a mode of baptism, on this subject, we will, with this apology for mentioning it at all, make a few remarks on it here. It must have been a very great ignorance of the Scriptures that made it customary to treat of mode in connection with baptism; since there is not one word said about it in the Bible. It is a man of straw, gotten up in these modern days, for men of bigotry and little charity to fight over. There is one question which, it appears to me, might be

easily settled, and when settled would put the mode of baptism to rest. That question is, What is the moral worth of mode? And as all sensible men must decide that there is no moral worth in mode, that decision would easily account for the silence of the Scriptures on the subject. That there is no moral worth in mode, we can easily show by applying it to other things where it has not been accustomed to be considered. Prayer, for instance, is a solemn duty and privilege. Now suppose I, becoming a stickler for mode, conclude that because you do not kneel down when you pray, God will not hear you. Is it not easily seen that I am attaching too much importance to the mode of prayer? But mode is worth as much to prayer as it is to baptism; and while the Christian world would never excuse me for placing such value on the mode of prayer, so, likewise, they should never excuse those who fix so high an estimate on the mode of baptism. The Lord's Supper is a solemn and important ordinance: suppose I become so fascinated with mode, as to deny to all the privilege of taking it with me, unless they will take it on their knees, as I do: would I not, for this insanity, meet the just frowns of the Christian world? So, likewise, should I meet those frowns, if I deny them the privilege of eating with me, on the account of a mode of baptism. Were I to draw a line of demarcation between my own party and all the rest of the world, you would charitably suppose that I drew that line upon good grounds—that I had solid reasons for doing so. But how would you be astonished when you came to learn that I made this line between myself and others, not only upon an

external ordinance of religion, but upon the mere fashion of administering that ordinance! Were I to do this, I feel now that I could never excuse myself, whatever others might do for me.

If there be no moral worth in mode, then mode was a mere circumstance of the ordinance, and accommodated itself to the circumstances of the occasion; which, we think, was the case in the days of the apostles. If the jailer and his house had to be baptized at midnight, they could attend to it very easily, so far as mode was concerned. Indeed, I think they never thought about a mode of baptism; for if they had, they must have said something about it. If Philip had occasion to baptize the eunuch in the wilderness, as far as mode was concerned, he could take him to the water and do so. At all events, he did not take him back to Jerusalem, to see whether the brethren would receive him, before he baptized him.

It will be noticed that we did not mention mode among the properties of baptism; for we have no Scripture warrant that this or that mode is essential to the ordinance. If, then, three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and baptized on the same day, although the brook Cedron was always dry at that season of the year—and the authorities would be far from allowing them the use of the pools—yet, so far as mode was concerned, they could baptize them all on that day. As to what mode they did it in, I do not know; and I suppose they did not care, as no mode of baptism was mooted in their day. "But," says Benedict's History, "the word baptidzo defines its own meaning, as

much as the word triangle defines its own shape." Perhaps he may be half right in this: as there are no less than four different shapes brought to view by the word triangle, so, also, it is true that there are different modes brought to view by the word baptidzo. But I have heard Greek scholars say that the word buthizo means nothing but to submerge under water. The apostles, however, never used that word in connection with baptism; which is the very word they certainly would have used, if they had either immersed any one themselves or seen it done by others. But I have no idea that any of the apostles ever witnessed a case of immersion; though I regard immersion as a valid baptism, because all three of the elements of baptism that we have pointed out above, meet in it. Then, as mode is wholly accidental to the ordinance of baptism, the ordinance is not affected by it. If a man called of God to preach the gospel, either dip a man in water or apply it in any of the other modes usually practiced among us, the element of water is used, and his is a valid baptism. Such were certainly the views of the framers of our Discipline, when they allowed us the mode of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It is clear that they attached no moral worth to mode. Indeed, I think they were men of too much intelligence to descend to any thing so shallow as a particular mode of baptism.

We give it as our opinion, that there is no particular mode of baptism; and as we are not expected to prove a negative, let those who think there is, establish one if they can. But as they have not succeeded during the last three

hundred years of quarrelling over it, I know not when they will succeed; I think never. Some are so anxious for mode, that after preaching to me for half a century that our present Bible did maintain a particular mode of baptism, are so far convinced of the contrary, I am told that they are gone off to make a new version of the Bible, in order to bring it in.

In all the history of the Church, we find that, in proportion as any Church has backslidden, and lost the life of religion, so much the more zealous has it become for the rites, ceremonies, modes, and forms of religion. Christ complained of the Pharisees at this point. He told them, "Ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." The Roman Catholics have been sticklers for mode, ever since their apostasy as a Church. The less religion a people have, therefore, the more importance they attach to its externals. We fully agree with an ingenious author who says, "They are aptest to contend for the outside show of religion who have nothing else." With these few hints, I dismiss the subject.

SERMON XVI.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

SERMON XVI.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—1 JOHN ii. 15.

WE look upon the author of this text as being well qualified to fix a proper estimate upon the world. He was in early life the beloved disciple of Christ, the Divine Teacher, who made the world; and we may suppose that he imparted to this favorite disciple proper instructions as to its value. Add to this, he had the experience and observation of about thirty-eight years after the crucifixion of his Master. In his opinions of the world, therefore, Christians should have the utmost confidence. These opinions, it will be seen, are strongly set forth in the words of our text, and in the preceding part of the verse in which it is found. But observe the preface to these opinions. He says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." And, as if he had especial interest in the little children, he says again, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have

known the Father." But, lest their attention was not sufficiently drawn to the important truths to which he was about to give utterance, he reverses the order of his preface by saying, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." The repetition here used by this venerable apostle, whose words were generally few and pointed, must have put anxiety on tip-toe to know what he had written—the sum of which we find in verse 15, "Love not the world." And, lest this should not be sufficiently definite, he adds, "Neither the things that are in the world." And then, as the most powerful motive within the range of human thought to induce them to obey this important command, he continues, in the language of our text, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And, indeed, if the fear of forfeiting the love of the Father would not influence a man, there is nothing else that might be expected to do so. When we see one sin more frequently exposed in the Scriptures than another, we may infer that there lies the point of man's greatest danger. And we think that there is no sin more frequently exposed than the love of the world. Would you like to hear our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount? You would hear him say, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." Would you hear him utter his parables? You would hear him, in the beautiful parable of the sower, explain that the thorns represent "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." Would you like to hear

the learned Apostle Paul preach? You would hear him say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." But we need not repeat the many passages in which this sin is condemned; suffice it to say, that the apostle thought it necessary to warn little children whose sins were forgiven them of the danger of it, as also young men who had overcome the wicked one. Nor did he seem to think that even fathers, who had known Christ from the beginning, were free from the danger of this sin.

I. Wherein lies the turpitude of loving the world? It is idolatry. It is virtually dethroning the Deity from our affections, and setting up this paltry world in his stead; and he is a jealous God, who will not even divide his glory with another. Love is said to be the ruling passion of the human heart; and whatever takes up and occupies it, will necessarily drive from the heart all other objects that might rival this. Hence, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Love to God is the full accomplishment of all the provisions of Divine mercy, and hence love to the world, in any or in all of its forms, is the most direct enemy to those provisions of mercy. How, then, can a man be happy in the presence of God who loves the world more than he loves God?

II. We will now bring forward several arguments to show that the world is an improper object of our affections. Nor do we think these arguments unnecessary even for fathers who have known Christ from their youth.

1. The world is an improper object of our affections, because it will not continue commensurate with our existence.

There will come a time when we shall exist with sensible wants when the world has passed away. Separate a man from that which he loves most, and fix in his breast a despair of ever again realizing that object, and you need not send him to hell: he can be nowhere else. If we love the world, then, there will come a time when the object of our love will be absent for ever. Then "love not the world."

2. We cannot promise ourselves the world even until it does pass away. We must pass away from it. We must soon die and leave the world, whether we love God or mammon. And how must he feel in that hour who is parting from all that he loves best! With what unutterable sadness will he look for the last time upon this poor world, for whose delusive enjoyments he has sold his birthright to heaven! What agony must he feel, as the cords of his earthly love are breaking one by one, and he is losing sight of the dearest objects of his affections! From such a death may the Lord deliver us all! How vain and trifling will the world appear in the eyes of such a one, when he has passed away from earth, and is standing in the presence of an offended God! Hell itself were a refuge, if it would but protect him from the gloom and bitter remorse of that hour. Then let me beseech you not to set your affections on the things of the world, for you will hazard eternal interests by so doing.

3. We cannot with any certainty claim the things of the world even until we die; for how often, even in the midst of life, do they take to themselves wings and fly away! And

he that loves the world must, in such a ease, become miserable. Could we, in this money-loving world, colleet together all the tragieal cases of suieide committed by lovers of the world, beeause this idol had eluded their grasp and was fled from them, you would shudder on aecount of your danger, and flee from a passion that leads to sueh consequences, as you would flee from the face of a serpent. How strong must the love of the world be in the breast of that man who kills himself beeause he has lost his money! yet thousands have done so; and if you love the world, it is impossible for you to predict that you will not do so likewise. We therefore extend to you the good advice of the apostle: "Love not the world."

4. Christ says, that though a man should gain the whole world, and then lose his own soul, he would be profited nothing. Even though it were possible for a single individual to possess the whole world, and to retain possession of it during the whole of his lifetime, it could never afford him true happiness. It promises to make its possessor happy, but it never has done so, never can, and never will. Hence the expression of our Saviour, "the deeeitfulness of riehes." Take, for example, Alexander the Great. After thirteen brief years of vietory, he found the whole Eastern world, exeept a few small provinees, under his control. The wealth of the Indies was poured at his feet. But did it make him happy? On the contrary, he found himself unhappy still; and took a fatiguing journey to the temple of Jupiter to be ordained a god, thinking, perhaps, that this

would complete his bliss. It is said of him that when the astronomer told him that the planet Jupiter was a much larger globe than this, he actually wept because he could not go and conquer it also. This little world was too small for his ambition. To drown his sorrows, he at last resorted to the wine-cup, and died in a drunken fit in the city of Babylon. How did he feel on his death-bed? It is likely he realized the truth of what Dr. Young has so aptly said:

> "All below is shadow, all beyond is substance:
> The reverse is folly's creed."

It is according to universal experience that the more we have of this world, the more of it we crave; and that craving turns to carking cares how to manage what we have got, and how to improve it. These cares are the opposite of human happiness—the opposite of that contentment which the Scriptures recommend. Indeed, the world is our servant; and it should disgrace a man in the eyes of all respectable people to make an idol of his servant. Man was certainly born for a higher sphere than this world, and to seek higher enjoyments than it can afford.

III. We will now reverse the preceding arguments, and show that God is the proper object of our affections. In this we have an easy task; for,

1. God will be present to bless us when the world has passed away. While its conflagration will be the death-knell of happiness to those that love it, to those that love God it will be the time of the glorious appearing of the

object of their love, and consequently the happiest day that ever dawned upon them. Then let us love God with all our hearts.

2. He alone can comfort us in a dying-hour. His presence with those who love him will gild the gloomy horizon of the grave, and bid them pass through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil. Having no love of the world to bind them down to this earth, they leave it in triumph. Witness the thousands who have died with the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, triumphing over death, and leaving behind them testimony that they had gone to heaven to "see Him as he is," "whom, having not seen," they have loved.

3. God alone can uphold us under the catastrophes of fortune here. While losses and disappointments fall to our lot in common with the rest of mankind, we have the comforting thought that we have a home in heaven where sorrow cannot come. And even though we should lose all but God, we are still happy, for the object of our love remains. There is an immortality and divinity about the soul of man, that cannot be satisfied with less than the God who gave it. Short of his love, man is miserable. This has been the sad experience of but too many of our race already. Then we exhort you, let this fact be in your way, and drive you to the foot of the cross of Christ, who alone can make you happy either here or hereafter.

IV We will now apply some of the Scripture tests by which we may determine whether we love God or the world, for the text declares that we cannot love them both. It is

said that God will "try them that dwell upon the face of the earth," and we think the trial will be on the point now before us—to test whether God or the world be the object of our love. But to proceed. We ask, Did Moses love God more than the world? Witness his sacrifice of the honors, wealth, and pleasures of Egypt, for a campaign through the wilderness at God's command—clearly showing his affection for God above all earthly enjoyments. Did Abraham love God more than the world? Witness his offering up of Isaac, the dearest earthly object he had, at the command of God, and you have clear evidence that he loved God more than all earthly considerations. Did the young man who came running to the Saviour to know what he must do to inherit eternal life, love God more than the world? His grief at the command to sell all that he had and give it to the poor, readily shows that he did not. Did Judas love God more than the world? He sold his Lord to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver—thus clearly showing that he loved the world more than God. Did Job love God more than the world? Witness his integrity after all earthly good was swept away from him, and you have evidence that he loved God more than the world. Did the apostles love God more than the world? Let the various sacrifices they made during life, and at last the sacrifice of life itself, bear witness to the fact that they did. Did the Jews, who were carried captive into Babylon, love God? See the whole of them, except three, prostrated in idolatry before an image of gold, and the question will be easily answered; whereas, these three exceptions gave clear evidence on the

other side. The same question might be asked with regard to all the martyrs who have died for their Master from that day to this, and you would have the same ready answer. Do the Methodist preachers love God more than the world? See them leave their homes and friends, the comforts of life, and the graves of their fathers, and go out into the cold world to preach the gospel to sinners for the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars per year, and you can decide which they love most, God or the world. Do the members of the Methodist Church love God more than the world? Witness the liberality with which they contribute to build churches, to send out missionaries, to support superannuated preachers, and the widows and orphans of preachers, and to make up the allowance of their preachers, and let your acquaintance with them furnish an answer accordingly. And now rest assured that God will bring your religious duty in contact with your worldly interest at some time and in some way, for the purpose of testing you on this point. Let me solemnly ask, Does your past life testify for or against you in this particular? If your life does not clearly testify that you love God more than the world, it will be vain for you to tell us that you do, for actions speak louder than words. But I hear one say, "My worldly interest is immediate and visible, and religion remote and invisible; and the cords of worldly love have woven themselves so closely about me that it does not appear that even Samson himself could now pull me loose." But for your consolation, let it be remembered that while the prophet inquired to whom "the arm of the Lord was revealed," that arm is revealed to you in the

character of help, and that it is stronger than Samson's. If you are entirely willing to loose your affections from the things of earth and set them on things above, however hard the task may be, he will gladly help you to do so. When this is done, and only then, can you hope for a home in heaven, the place of his abode.

SERMON XVII.

THE CART ROPE.

SERMON XVII.

THE CART ROPE.

"Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope."—ISA. v. 18.

RELIGION, my brethren, is so sublime in its nature, so unearthly in its origin, and of such untold value, that human language has ever been too poor to explain it. Hence the inspired writers have employed various figures of speech in order, as far as possible, to bring down this otherwise too sublime a subject to the capacities of a weak and benighted understanding. In order that these figures might be more readily comprehended, they have usually been drawn from objects that are familiar to us; and perhaps among them all there is no figure more happily drawn than the one found in our text—all being familiar with the art of hauling on wheel-carriages. We proceed, therefore, to illustrate this figure, and to obtain from it the instructions intended to be conveyed by the evangelical prophet who was its author.

I. We shall inquire into the load here said to be drawn, which is termed iniquity and sin. That there is a difference made by the prophet between iniquity and sin, is evident from the fact that he employs different means to

draw one, from those which are employed to draw the other. The only difference, however, that we are able to discover is this: iniquity applies to those earlier improprieties of youth, or first departures from the good and right way, which run so parallel to it that many young persons consider them to be no departures whatever from that way. They imagine that their youth and buoyancy of spirits justify them in the indulgence of those vanities commonly practiced by the young. Instead of remembering their Creator in the days of their youth, as they are taught in the Scriptures to do, they think this a proper season to indulge in that which the prophet here calls iniquity. Sin, on the other hand, has reference to the confirmed habits of vice practiced by persons of riper years, which make a heavier load on the conscience, and require stronger means to draw them, than the iniquitous vanities of youth, which have not yet grown into confirmed habits.

If any should doubt that sin and iniquity will make a load for wheel-carriages, let him walk with me to Gethsemane's garden, and there see him who "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," sweating "as it were great drops of blood" under the weight of iniquity and sin; not his own, but imputed to him as our second Adam. Or, if you please, go with me to yon group of faithful Christians, and let us ask them if sin is a burden. They will tell us that they have felt it to be a burden too intolerable to be borne—a mountain's weight that threatened to sink them lower than the grave. As a figure of speech, therefore, the prophet may well represent sin as a load to be drawn.

And now, having ascertained the load which the sinner draws, we will proceed to point out some of the difficulties which lie in the road to that dread market-place whither he is drawing it. In presenting these difficulties, I shall doubtless but too truly tell many a sinner his own experience. The difficulties here to be noticed are those barriers of mercy which the gracious Lord, not willing that any should perish, has placed between the sinner and that woe mentioned in our text, to which he is drawing his burden. And be it here premised, that sin and iniquity are sweet *mouthfuls* instead of morsels to him, with which he is unwilling to part; and never did a mule on a mountain-side pull harder to get his burden to the top, than we shall presently see him pulling to get his iniquity and sin over these barriers of mercy.

1. The first difficulty in his way we will call the mountain of religious example and instruction. At this day of gospel light and religious liberty, and in this favored country, it requires very hard drawing for the sinner to overcome this difficulty, and reconcile himself to his sinful course in the face of all the light that shines around him. Especially is this the case where that sinner has a pious mother. I have been in hundreds of love-feasts of the Methodist Church, and have heard a great many experiences there alluded to, and in a large majority of cases which I now remember, the first impressions for good were attributed to the teachings and example of a mother. These mothers it appears have thus built a mountain strong and high, over which their children in after-years find it difficult to draw their load of

iniquity; notwithstanding, it is possible that they may do so. And here let me exhort all concerned in the rearing of children, and mothers especially, Build your mountain strong, and be encouraged; for long after you are dead and gone to heaven, it may be that these very efforts you are now making will be the means of keeping your children out of woe's horrid domain.

It is our good fortune, furthermore, to live in the days of Sunday-schools—those exeellent auxiliaries to parents in imparting religious instruction to their children. Sunday-schools are at this day eontributing a large share towards the building up of this barrier to the destruction of the rising generation. God speed them on in their laudable enterprise!

But who does not see that a sinner has hard work to get along with his iniquity and sin with all these advantages—so much light, and so many helps to influenee him to leave it off! May all those institutions which are caleulated to impart religious knowledge, prosper under the Divine patronage and protection.

2. The seeond barrier that we shall notice is the Bible. The Bible, my brethren, is the truth of God himself, proceeding from the Source of infinite wisdom; and all of its important truths are so well adapted to our capacities, as not to be easily misunderstood. God therein reveals himself as being opposed to all sin. Indeed, sin is itself a violation of his will; he therefore eannot look upon it with the least degree of allowance, and has said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God."

Psalm ix. 17. "God is angry with the wicked every day." Psalm vii. 11. It certainly requires hard drawing for the wicked to overcome the obstacles placed in their way by these plain statements of the Bible; and long and arduously have they labored, in all ages—but especially from the time of Arius down to the present day—to explain away their force, so as still to allow themselves the practice of iniquity and sin. But after all that they have said and done—though they have employed the heads and pens of even Gibbon and Hume, and those also of Volney, Voltaire, Tom Paine, and the pamphlet scribblers of the United States, such as Ballou, Winchester, Bradley, and Foster—still the truth of God revealed against sin stands out so prominently and plainly stated, as to leave those authors themselves in doubt of the truth of their own theories. It is still very hard for the wicked to climb over this mountain with their load of iniquity and sin, notwithstanding the aid of these strong quadrupeds (for such I call them) who have conspired to render them assistance.

The Bible is, after all, the only revelation from the great Maker of mankind. If it is not, we are driven to the cheerless conclusion that there is no revelation at all. As for Tom Paine's book of nature as a revelation, so far from being such, it is too weak for refutation; for it is clear that without the Bible the book of nature could never be read or understood. Though some expositors have pretended so to understand it, their expositions have no binding authority upon any but themselves; and no man, from the beginning until now, who has discarded the Bible, has been able to put

any thing in its stead having any binding authority, by which we should be judged, acquitted, or condemned. It is, moreover, obliged to be granted, that those whose lives correspond with the teachings of the Bible, are by far the best of our race. The Bible, therefore, may well be an obstacle hard to be overcome by those who are freighted with iniquity and sin.

3. The next barrier we shall bring to view is the Holy Spirit. This is by far the most efficient barrier we have mentioned. Indeed, it is God himself, in one of the persons of his existence, coming down to the dark cell of depraved man to light up that cell, and point him the only road to happiness. We have ample proof from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit knocks at the door of every heart; that he employs all the means within the purview of gospel grace to bring each and every one to a happy conclusion of the toils of this life, and to a home in heaven at last. Yet it is possible, though we may not be able to explain how, for all his influences to be so resisted that the unfortunate devotee of iniquity and sin shall miss this happy end. He may so resist the Holy Ghost, and grieve this Spirit, as to draw his iniquity and sin over even this barrier of mercy; though it may easily be seen that it requires hard pulling to do so. I have witnessed the scene frequently in revival meetings, where some unfortunate lover of sin has had such hard toiling to resist the Spirit, whose influence was then upon him, as to perspire freely—laboring in his sweat to hold on to his load of sin, notwithstanding the steep ascent of this mountain. And it has been, alas! the experience of but too many of

our race, that they have arrived at the top of this mountain with their load still with them; for God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Gen. vi. 3. And he hath further commanded us, "Quench not the Spirit." 1 Thess. v. 19.

4. We shall now proceed to notice the last barrier between the sinner and that woe to which he is tending. That barrier is nothing less than the blood of atonement. "But hold," says one; "all that Christ died for in a saving sense will infallibly be saved." If this statement be true, then all the sinners that are already lost, found their way to hell without going over this barrier. That the contrary is true we shall certainly show, if Christ himself may be trusted for the truth on this subject. He says, John xv. 24, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, then they had not had sin." A very clear testimony, this, that but for the shedding of his blood for them—which is the work which none other man did—they had not sinned, at least against that blood; but now it appears that that blood had fixed a turpitude upon their sins such as could alone make them worthy of eternal punishment. The blood of Christ, like the gospel of Christ, may, therefore, be considered a "savor of life unto life" unto those who believe, and of "death unto death" unto those who by unbelief trample upon that blood, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace. Heb. vi. 6: "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Heb. x. 29: "Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he

was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." It certainly appears to us that no sane man can come to any other conclusion from these passages, than that a sinner draws his iniquity and sin over the heights of this mountain-barrier on his way to hell; nor could he go to hell without sin to send him there; but if Christ had not died for him in a saving sense, then he "had not had sin," Christ himself being judge. It will further appear that the higher he climbs over these barriers, the more dire will be his plunge into that woe whither he is hastening.

II. We will next consider the means employed by the sinner to draw this load, viz., "cords of vanity," and something which the prophet compares to "a cart rope."

1. Cords of vanity. These cords, as we have already stated, allude to the vain amusements of youth, as far as they may be in conflict with religious duties. The prophet seems to suppose them to be small when compared with the cart rope. Indeed, in youth the load is not so heavy but that mere vain amusements will serve to keep the sinner away from Christ.

The chief of these vain amusements we conceive to be the ball-room; for we would not rank dancing at a ball among the grosser crimes of the day, but among those youthful vanities calculated to keep young people from remembering their Creator in the days of their youth. There are various other amusements, however, such as different kinds of plays, that are almost equal to dancing in accomplishing the designs of Satan, and keeping the young away from Christ. Many of

our youth seem to be entirely ignorant of the fact that these amusements are found in the wrong path to happiness; notwithstanding, so far from leading to religious knowledge, they are not even a means of intellectual improvement. There are many youths in our country, who, by employing the time devoted to these vain amusements in intellectual culture, might acquire a much better education than they are likely to do while so much of their time is spent in pursuit of these vanities.

2. There are other burdens to be drawn, and other means found in our text to draw them. Sin, as we have before said, has reference here to the confirmed habits of vice practiced by persons of riper years. Having passed his youthful days, the man is capable of forming for himself a system of religion; and he thinks it necessary now to select some religious creed to which he shall give the preference above all others. As a lover of sin, he is very apt, in making this selection, to embrace that which will excuse him in a course of sin, or at least make allowances for him as a sinner; and whatever may be found in his system that would look upon sin with allowance, must be the cart rope of our text, by which that sin is drawn.

We will now proceed to form, from the various creeds that he might adopt, a rope amply sufficient in strength, as we think, to draw all the sins of the universe all the way to woe's wide empire. We will first take that part of the Westminster Confession of Faith which, apart from the explanation given it by the divines, is the plain text of deism; that is, "God, from all eternity, did, for the most

wise and holy purposes, of his own will freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass." Therefore, says the deist, nothing can come to pass wrong; and there is no sin in the universe, for sin is a violation of his will; but that will, according to the above, has never been violated. He holds, therefore, that Christ was an impostor, who died for our sins when there was no sin to die for. Now it is easily seen that this statement of God's ordination, with deism attached to it, instead of the explanation of Calvinists, will make a rope sufficiently strong to draw all sin (so called) along with us to the grave. But add to this Calvin's own explanation, and it then follows that none can forsake sin except those whom God has determined to save. Now take for a third strand of this rope Universalism, which declares that though all were sinners, Christ having died for all, all will therefore be infallibly saved, whether they forsake sin or not: twist these three strands together, and you have a rope strong enough to draw all the sins in the universe over all the mountains God ever made.

And now, once for all, whatever may be found in any system of religion that would indulge the believer in that system in the hope of heaven, notwithstanding he is not saved from all sin, must be that which the prophet compares in our text to a cart rope. And I would here admonish all, that if they leave this world with the stains of moral evil upon them, heaven is too pure a place for their abode; and that which will constitute their hell, will be that they placed their unhallowed foot upon that blood which was intended and well calculated to cleanse them from all sin.

III. We will consider the market-place to which this load is drawn, here called by the prophet "woe." This expression precisely corresponds with one made by the Apostle Paul, who says, "The wages of sin is death." And is it not very strange that a rational man, who desires his own happiness, should labor so industriously during the whole of his life as we have seen the sinner labor, for such dreadful wages in the end!

From the view we have taken of this subject, it will appear that it is at least as easy, and we think easier, with all the aids and influences which surround us at the present day, to be a good man and go to heaven, than to be a bad one and reap eternal woe. It will further appear that, having sinned against infinite merit, the sinner must reap eternal punishment. As long, therefore, as Christ remains in heaven, upon whose blood he has trampled, so long must he remain in hell; nor can we conceive it possible that there should be an endless punishment upon any other principles. How dreadful, then, must be the state of that sinner who shall be condemned to spend eternity in such a hell as this!

"There, on the raging billows tossed,
For ever, O! for ever lost!"

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE DEVIL.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE DEVIL.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—JAMES iv. 7.

As it would be the height of folly for a man to take up weapons to fight with before he knows of the existence of an enemy, we shall be expected to establish the existence of the devil. Concerning the devil there is no more revealed than was necessary to the resistance commanded in the text, and hence arise thousands of speculations concerning him, which, if they could all be solved, would be of no use to us. We shall therefore confine ourselves to what is revealed of this fallen spirit, as nearly as possible.

I. His existence as a personal being. We are told by those who deny his personal existence, that the depravity of human nature is what the Scriptures mean by the word devil. And truly, if this were the only devil, we have ample evidence around us that he is not sufficiently resisted by thousands of our race. But this theory cannot be true, from the fact that our Saviour, who took our nature, sin excepted, (Heb. iv. 15,) and certainly had no depravity of human nature, was, without any such depravity, "tempted

of the devil." But we are told by some that he must have had a depraved nature, or he could not have been tempted. But I ask, How could he pay Adam's debt if he had a depraved nature, as Adam had after the fall? For the law had demands against that nature that Adam had before the fall, and if Christ had a depraved nature, it appears to us that Adam might as well have died for his own sins as that Christ should die for him. But the fact is plain that Christ offered human nature in its purity, against which the law had no demands. He, then, without any depravity of human nature, was assailed and tempted by a being called the devil.

And again, Eve, before she had any depravity of human nature, was tempted of the devil. Upon the subject of Eve's temptation much has been said. Moses borrows the figure of a serpent, under which he presents this tempter, approaching Eve in the garden of Eden. Hence, it has generally been supposed that he approached her in the bodily shape of a serpent. Dr. Clarke, one of the greatest critics of Europe, could not receive the idea that he assumed the bodily shape of a serpent; and if a man of his learning could not receive this idea, neither will I receive it. But when the Doctor had abandoned the serpent, he was compelled to supply its place, which he did by substituting the orang-outang, or one of the monkey tribe. But this substitute does not satisfy me; so, with all due deference to the Doctor's opinion, I am compelled to find some other substitute for the serpent. I think it was the devil himself, not assuming the bodily shape of any beast of the earth. The Hebrew people were very particular that the name applied

to a person or thing should be expressive of its nature; so much so, that when the nature was changed, they changed the name also, as in the case of Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob. John the Baptist and our Saviour both followed this rule, and called persons by names suited to their natures. Hence they called the Scribes and Pharisees "serpents," though they were not in the bodily shape of snakes. Again, our Saviour at one time called Peter by the name of Satan: "But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan." Matt. xvi. 23. Now when Satan was engaged in a war with Michael, he was called "the dragon;" and when he was cast out into the earth, he was called "the devil;" and when he engaged in the low, mean business of tempting Eve, he was called a "serpent." Hence we have the names given him by the Hebrews through all the changes of his character. Rev. xii. 9. But we cannot suppose that he underwent any organic changes, or that his bodily shape was altered with these names.

This point, however, will turn upon a single question: Could the devil make himself visible to Eve without the bodily shape of a beast of the earth? We think he could; for if God himself was visible to Adam and Eve before the fall, then other spirits might be. That God was visible to them, appears plain from the account we have of the interviews he had with them. That angels could become visible to men, even after the fall, we shall now proceed to show. It will be readily granted that angels became visible to Abraham on their way to destroy Sodom; and also to Lot, in Sodom. 2 Sam. xxiv. 17: "And David spake unto the

Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people." 1 Chron. xxi. 20: "And Ornan turned back and saw the angel." And we may say, in short, without quoting a hundred different passages, that angels became visible to shepherds in the field on the birth of our Saviour, to the disciples at the sepulchre, to John in the isle of Patmos, and on many other occasions. And now, if, as we read, 2 Cor. xi. 14, "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light," where was the use of his coming to Eve in the bodily shape of any beast? And would he not be more imposing in the likeness of an angel of light? Eve certainly would have more confidence in him in this character than she would have had in a snake or a monkey.

When this figure had been borrowed, it was of course carried on; and we find Satan represented under the idea of a serpent throughout the narrative. That serpents always crawled as they do now, I have no doubt: that God would curse even a serpent with reörganization, and doom him to crawl on his belly for the fault of the devil, is more than I can believe. But we have a text (Rev. xx. 2) that seems to settle the question. It reads thus: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, *which is the devil and Satan.*" And if that old serpent *is* the devil, then it follows that he was not in the shape of a snake or of a monkey. But if he was in the shape of either, he is so still; nor can it be proved that any being that God ever made was ever reörganized as to his physical system. We conclude, then, and we think correctly, that the devil is here called a serpent to represent him under his new character of a tempter; for if, in the

first place, he could become visible to Eve without assuming the body of a beast of the field, and if, in the second place, he could appear as an angel of light, we see no use he could have for the body of a serpent or of a monkey, and think that he made no use of either, but that that old serpent *is* the devil.

From all that is revealed of him, we conclude that God made an angel and called him Satan. Satan sinned, (under what law is nothing to us,) and is then called a dragon. He is cast out of heaven into the earth, and is then called the devil. He approaches Eve as a tempter, and is called in that character a serpent.

II. Having established the personal existence of the being to be resisted, we proceed to notice some of his devices. And may I say of this generation, as Paul did to the Corinthians, that we "are not ignorant of his devices?" For if we are to fight an enemy, it is all-important that we understand the devices of that enemy as far as possible.

1. We think he has the power of putting evil thoughts into our minds, and hence arises the possibility of sinning by thought. A man should therefore resist him by repelling those evil thoughts. But as he is a thinking being, and must necessarily think, the only way he can repel evil thoughts is by substituting better ones in their stead. If he do this, we suppose that, notwithstanding he has evil thoughts—

> "Wild, blasphemous, or perditionous thoughts,
> Which Satan in him moved"—

yet if he repel them by substituting better thoughts as soon

as possible, he has not sinned by thought, but has at this point resisted the devil.

2. Satan is said to be "a roaring lion." He will present many frightful pictures to our imagination, for the purpose of scaring us out of our religious duty. Most of these pictures will probably be drawn from a presupposition of what the world will think of us. Now the proper way to resist the devil at this point is, never to suffer the supposition of what others will think of us to have the slightest effect upon our conduct when performing the duties we owe to God. And with the pure intention to please God rather than man, (for we can never please both,) we shall be able to resist him at this point.

3. We will notice, in the third place, the main device of Satan—that system of instrumentalities which he has set up in the world, and through which he carries on his work. The Lord set up a system of instrumentalities through which he would evangelize and save mankind, and Satan, probably taking his scheme from thence, set up his system of instrumentalities, and sent out his agents to carry on the work of destroying mankind.

The first that we shall notice among these is the grog-seller. But the grog-seller has to divide the amount of evil that he does with the distiller and the drunkard; and the large amount of evil done by these three classes must be shared equally between them. But as it is a rule of common law that each of the joint owners of an undivided estate owns the whole until the division, we will let the grog-seller at present own the whole of the evils belonging to

drunkenness; and certainly the devil is served thereby to a very great extent. The way to resist him in this particular is to "touch not, taste not" the accursed beverage. But a better way still is to adopt it as a rule never to purchase any article whatever from a grog-seller.

The next agents that we shall notice are those parents who neglect the religious instruction of their children. And among these are, alas! even professing Christians, who resist the religious impressions of their children, if, perchance, they should incline to join any other Church than their own. Children, in such a case as this, should resist the devil by feeling themselves under no obligations to follow their parents, any further than it appears to them that they follow Christ; for, after the age of accountability, they will have to answer for themselves before God.

But the main agencies of the devil that it is necessary for us to notice, are his preachers, styled by our Lord "false prophets;" elsewhere called "lying prophets." We need not flatter ourselves that we live in an age of the world when there are none of these. They are, however, either pure or mixed. The pure are those who advocate the unconditional salvation of all men; they hold that, though they sin, sin will not prevent their being saved, and hence give a loose rein to all sin and uncleanness. These, however, are so plain and undisguised that they cannot, in many places, do much for the cause of Satan; and hence the best device of this enemy of our souls is to mix a little truth with his errors, in order that they may be received among the multitudes of those who regard sin as a dangerous enemy. We

are, therefore, in the greatest danger from those preachers who denounce sin in so many words, and yet in their system we may find much to protect the sinner from compunctious visitings, and prevent him from that repentance without which he shall perish. We shall need at this point all the judgment and all the grace we are in possession of, in order to separate the precious from the vile. In doing this, we have the following plain rule: Whatever doctrine fosters or excuses sin, or even apologizes for it, is of the devil; and though it may be found in your own creed-book, it should be resisted. For instance, though your creed-book holds the doctrine of human depravity, and of the necessity of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with the doctrine of the resurrection, of a future judgment, and of eternal rewards and punishments, all of which are doctrines of God revealed in the Bible, yet if, at the same time, it holds that God had selected you or any other person from among mankind as the peculiar object of his favor, this part is of the devil, and well calculated to deceive you. It should therefore be resisted, for "God is no respecter of persons." If, in addition to this, your creed-book should tell you that after you really have got religion, you can never finally lose it, so as to be lost for ever, this is also of the devil, and should be resisted accordingly. For when we consider the depravity of our nature, the temptations that surround us, together with the heavy cross to be taken up, and the rigid self-denial necessary to future perseverance, we conceive that this fond notion of infallible perseverance is doing more to deceive and ruin professing Christians than any other

device of Satan, and cannot therefore be too strongly resisted. If any should blame me for these plain remarks, let him remember that in making them I am resisting the devil at this point.

And now, once for all, the book of God is one entire system of opposition to sin; and in proportion as our notions of theology tend to put down sin, and to destroy it from among men, in the same proportion will God fight our battles for us, and we shall prosper. But whenever we cease open hostilities to sin, and undertake to preach for the sake of popularity—a compromise with the world, so to call it—or, if you please, whenever we round off the corners of God's truth, to keep from hurting the people's feelings, on the one hand, and repudiate doctrinal sermons to conciliate them, on the other, then will God cease to fight for us, and we shall sink into the insignificance that we shall then deserve.

Then let us resist the devil by preaching against all sin and unrighteousness, though the world may hate us for it, as they hated our Master before us. But if the preacher tell us that we cannot be sanctified until death, and sanctification alone cleanses from all sin, then, of course, we are allowed some sin from now until death, and it follows that that much of his preaching is on the side of the wicked one. The best way to resist him at this point is to seek sanctification now. But the devil is more than a match for us of ourselves; therefore earnest and agonizing prayer to God, in the name of Christ, is to accompany all our resistance of him; for

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

III. "He shall flee from you." It is the experience of all Christians, that the more they resist the evil propensities of their nature, the more easily can they overcome them. So true is it that Satan, when resisted, will flee from you, that the more firmly you resist the love of a dram, for instance, and the importunity of dram-drinkers to associate with them, the weaker will your appetite be for a dram, on the one hand, and those advocates for the practice will the sooner withdraw and leave you alone. The more resolutely you take up a cross in the discharge of your Christian duties, the more easily can you take it up. The more firmly you "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," the less will Satan strive to frighten you away from it with the roar of the lion. The more holy and upright you live as a Christian, the less liable you will be to give way to those doctrines that are favorable to sin. In a word, in every way that Satan assails you, if you resist him firmly he will flee from you. And Christ has promised, for our encouragement, that "He that overcometh shall sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, [for he resisted the temptations of the devil,] and am set down with my Father in his throne."

SERMON XIX.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT

SERMON XIX.

FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."—MARK ix. 43, 44.

Do the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment? is the single question we expect to discuss under this text. And truly it presents to the mind of man a very afflictive thought. No wonder that men of loose habits should seek to expunge it from their creed. It is a doctrine, however, professedly believed by the whole of the Orthodox, as they are called. But do we really believe it? And if so, where is the zeal and energy put forth to pluck our fellow-beings as brands from the eternal burning, commensurate with this doctrine? We are often accused by our opponents of believing coldly and with indifference that which ought to call forth all our energies. How far this charge may be true, I will not pretend to say; but shall endeavor on this occasion to acquit myself of the charge, by exerting myself on this subject to the best of my ability. I shall, therefore, take the affirmative of the question before us, and assert

that the Scriptures do teach the doctrine of endless punishment.

I. We shall proceed, in the first place, with quotations from the Bible, commenting briefly on the passages quoted. The first passage we shall quote is for the purpose of showing what hell is made of: "A fire is kindled in mine anger, that shall burn to the lowest hell." Deut. xxxii. 22. Our opponents have claimed that there is no news of hell in the Old Testament; but here we find, even in the Pentateuch itself, the very ingredient of which hell is composed, viz., God's anger. And it is said that he is angry with the wicked every day. Psalm vii. 11. We may well be exhorted, therefore, Psalm ii. 12, to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." But be it remembered that God's anger is not like the anger of man, but rather like the anger of the law; and is indeed the anger of the Divine law; and those passages which speak of his anger as being turned away, refer invariably to those who repent of their sins. Of those who do not, it is said, Psalm vii. 12, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword." Christ said to the impenitent, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The Spirit testifies, Rev. ii. 21, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not." To all such, God's anger will "burn to the lowest hell." Dan. xii. 2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Here are persons who had lived, had died, and had slept in the dust, and who had afterwards arisen from the dust into opposite states of equal duration,

expressed by the term "everlasting" on both sides. Matt. xxv. 46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The words "everlasting" and "eternal," found in this passage, are the same in the original, and therefore express the same period of time. By reading from the thirty-first verse of the chapter in which this verse is contained, you will find that the two classes spoken of were called sheep and goats; and that the goats were commanded to depart, with the curse of God upon them, into everlasting fire. Mark iii. 29: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." There must be an eternal damnation, then, or else no one was ever in danger of it. Whatever the unpardonable sin may be, is nothing to the argument here. But again we ask, Who can be in danger of eternal damnation, if there be no such a state? 1 Cor. v. 10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." What sensible man would be terrified at the idea that all men would be saved? But the idea brought to view in this passage is, "Knowing the eternity of future punishment, we persuade men." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9: "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in a flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Now the Lord Jesus Christ has not yet been revealed in flaming fire; the time is yet to come, therefore, when those who have disobeyed the gospel shall realize this awful and everlasting destruction. 2 Pet. ii. 9: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished." The punishment of the unjust, then, is in reserve for them at the day of judgment. They do not receive it in this life, therefore, as some pretend. Rev. xix. 20: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone." That lake of fire, burning with brimstone, is described by Isaiah, xxx. 33: "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." The anger of the Lord, as it is called in Deuteronomy, is here said to be like a stream of brimstone; and, indeed, when his wrath is kindled, and his sword whetted against the finally impenitent, fire and brimstone might seem a heaven compared to it. Rev. xx. 10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are; and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Surely no man can have any confidence in himself who will deny that endless punishment is here

spoken of. But as there are thousands of texts of the same import, it is useless to multiply quotations. We deem those we have already quoted to be sufficient for our purpose. If they are not, the Bible itself would not be sufficient.

II. If Universalism be true, and the Bible really teaches limited punishment, (though we see it not,) then it will follow that Christ and the apostles were Universalists. Let us consider them in that light for a while, to see how strangely the doctrine will fit them.

1. If they were Universalists, it is passing strange that they should manifest so much concern for the salvation of their hearers. Christ weeping over the fated city of Jerusalem, was a very strange lamentation for a Universalist! The Apostle Paul has said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." How strange! Did he not know that they could but be saved? But we are ridiculed very much by our opponents, as "soul-saving preachers;" they call us, with a sneer, "soul-savers;" whereas, the Apostle Paul said that he was made all things to all men, that he might *save* some. The apostle, then, instead of being a Universalist, was a "soul-saving preacher." St. James has said, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall *save* a soul from death." Here is another "soul-saver." Very strange anxiety for Universalists! Perhaps, after all, that was not their doctrine! Christ has said, Matt. x. 22, "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Now, had he been a Universalist, he would have said, "All men at the end shall be saved." Paul has said, 1 Tim. iv. 16,

"Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." So Timothy was to be a "soul-saving preacher" also. Think you he was a Universalist?

2. If they were Universalists, their preaching produced an exceedingly strange effect upon their hearers. Take, for instance, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Is it probable that it was at the end of a flaming Universalist sermon that three thousand of his hearers, under strong agitation, cried out, "What shall we do?" Who ever became so excited as to inquire what they must do to be saved, under Universalist preaching? Their conduct was exceedingly foolish, if Peter had just convinced them that they would all be saved. I think it pretty certain that Peter preached no such doctrine. Neither did the poor trembling jailer believe it, when he asked Paul what he must do to be saved. Paul tells the Corinthians, moreover, that he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved. A very strange effect of his preaching, unless he was in truth what he says of himself, a "soul-saving preacher." We have a further account of the effect produced by the preaching of the apostles, in Mark xvi. 26: "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Now what are the signs that follow the preaching of Universalists? The very constitution of their Church, written by themselves, will, in conformity to the doctrine they profess, allow every member to do just as he pleases—being assured that he will be saved in the end. But the signs that followed the preaching of the apostles

were signs of repentance and reformation. Their hearers were influenced to "flee from the wrath to come." We think it pretty clear, then, that the apostles believed the doctrine of endless punishment—especially as our Saviour had taught them, Matt. x. 28, not to fear "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

3. If Christ and his apostles were Universalist preachers, it is very strange that they used such language as they did on many occasions. Christ said, Matt. v. 22, "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." No Universalist would talk thus without explaining himself. He further says in our text, "It is better to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to go into hell fire." And further, in Matt. xxiii. 33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" And still further, in Luke xvi. 23, "In hell he lifted up his eyes." Would one who did not believe the doctrine of endless punishment use such language as that? Paul has said, Eph. v. 5, "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The same apostle further says, Rom. xiii. 2, "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." And again, in 1 Tim. v. 12, "Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith." Peter also says, 2 Peter ii. 3, "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and

their damnation slumbereth not." Now all these, and thousands more of similar import, are strange and unguarded expressions for Universalists to use. Therefore the apostles were not Universalists, for they wrote and spoke under Divine inspiration.

III. The doctrine which teaches the final salvation of all men, and that this world is the place of punishment, can never be reconciled to the providence of God toward his creatures. On this subject we know but in part, but, so far as his providence is revealed in the Scriptures, we may understand it; and while we are guided by their teachings, we occupy safe ground. I will first refer you to the entire book of Job on this subject. Job was a "perfect and an upright man." And while there was none like him in all the earth for rectitude of character, so also there was none like him in the amount and severity of his afflictions. This is certainly clear proof that this life is not a state of retribution, where virtue and vice meet their full rewards. We next refer you to the seventy-third Psalm. In this Psalm Asaph discusses the subject fully; and while he says of the wicked, that they "prosper in the world," and that "their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish," he tells us, on the other hand, that the "waters of a full cup" are wrung out to God's people. When Asaph saw this, "his steps had well-nigh slipped." But when he went into the sanctuary, (the right place to learn the truth,) he learned that the end of these same wicked was destruction; and I suppose he became for ever cured of any temptation to Universalism. Our Saviour has

said, speaking of his followers, John xvi. 20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." In the same chapter, verse 33, he explains where it is and how long it shall be that they shall weep and lament. He says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." While his followers are in the world, then, they weep and lament, and the world rejoices; and yet we are told that this is the world of punishment for sin! It cannot be so, if Christ can be trusted for the truth. If there is no danger of endless punishment after death, what is there to prompt us to the rigid self-denial enjoined in the text—that of cutting off the right hand? If we ever get to heaven at all, then all our sufferings by the way are but "light afflictions," which "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Now, according to the advocates of the doctrine we oppose, the more we sin, the more we suffer; and the more we suffer, the greater the weight of glory. I am not at all surprised, therefore, that they should live in sin, especially when their nature prompts them to do so. Nor am I surprised that they do not cut off a right hand; for there is no motive to virtue in the notion that all will fare alike in the next world; nor can it become a duty, in this case, to cut off that hand, as it would be of great use to them here. But the advocates of this doctrine gravely tell us that conscience will punish us in this world. But it is the nature of man, when he knows of certain future relief, to be relieved already in mind, though his circumstances may remain unaltered. If

he is to know certainly that he will get to heaven in the end, he is very foolish to let conscience trouble him at all. Nay, I venture to say that, under that doctrine, conscience does not trouble him; or it is a very blind and foolish conscience that does so. And now, to conclude, suppose the advocate of this doctrine is right, and I am wrong. It is easily seen that I am as safe as he; and I suppose he will acknowledge the possibility of being wrong. But suppose I am right, and he is wrong—which is certainly a possible case—then he is gone; for, not having cut off the right hand, he is sent "into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." But if he still persist in risking his salvation on such unsafe grounds, he will soon learn, from painful experience, whether there is a hell or not.

SERMON XX.

THE RESURRECTION.

SERMON XX.

THE RESURRECTION

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."—1 Cor. xv. 20.

The apostle in this chapter has very ably presented the resurrection of Christ, as the great base upon which the whole Christian system rests. And while it is indeed the foundation of all Christian hope, it is also the crowning point of the entire system; for it must be obvious to every one, that if Christ, after living and dying as a man, did really rise from the dead, that fact alone will establish for ever all his pretensions to a Divine origin, as less than Divinity could not rise from the dead. His enemies, the Jews, themselves acknowledged that if the fact of his resurrection went abroad, the last error would be worse than the first. Matt. xvii. 64. Indeed, they could but know that if the fact that he had power to rise from the dead were generally understood, it would put the question of his divinity for ever to rest, and place it entirely beyond their reach. It is perfectly astonishing that men of great minds, such as Gibbon and Hume, should ever attack Christianity

at any other point; since, if this fact were overcome, the whole system tumbles to ruins; and unless it be overcome, Christianity stands impregnable to earth and hell.

Christ said, Matt. xvi. 18, that the gates of hell should not prevail against his Church; and it may be well to notice some of the fiery trials through which it has passed. At the time of its establishment, Rome was mistress of the Eastern world; and, having no other wars on hand, the emperor attempted to put down Christianity. His plan was, to burn all its professors, and all the books promulgating its doctrines; and, with all earthly power in his hands, he must have felt certain of success, especially as the cause he opposed was in its infancy. But yet he failed. The next emperor, probably intending to show his superiority over his predecessor, made the same attempt, but with no better success. His successor likewise made the same attack upon Christianity; and so on, until ten of them had successively bent their energies to that point, and all had failed. And is it not surprising, if ten emperors of Rome, when Christianity was in its infancy, could not put it down, that Gibbon and Hume, after it had grown up to manhood, so as to speak for itself, should imagine that they were able to shake the rock upon which the Christian's hopes are built? But after they had made their simultaneous and strenuous efforts to do so, still the fact of Christ's resurrection, unshaken, looked them sternly in the face. As for Hume's arguments against miracles, they are simply ridiculous; forasmuch as he would have us to think either, first, that God had bound himself not to violate the laws of nature, or that

he, Hume, understood all those laws so as to know when they were violated. With this short notice, we will dismiss him as unworthy of our confidence.

Again, the Crusades, undertaken by the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, were a sufficient scandal to Christianity to put down any cause not divinely supported. But Christianity survives even that stain upon its holy character. And further, the millions massacred by the Church of Rome for the last twelve centuries, are but so many outrages upon the holiness which Christianity inculcates. But the Christian religion, after passing through all these fiery ordeals, still lives; and lifting its head above the tide of persecution directed against it, still holds out the sceptre of peace and salvation to the nations of the earth. It is still true that the gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

And now, candid reader, we think that the preservation of a pure Christianity through all these fires, is a standing proof of the divinity of its Author; and therefore stand prepared to believe the astounding fact of Christ's resurrection, if we shall find reliable proofs in favor of that fact.

I. Did such a person as Jesus Christ of Nazareth live at the time and place in which history places him? That he did is a fact as well attested as any other fact of history, and even better attested than many others; for, besides the record of his disciples, we have the testimony of Pliny, and Tacitus, the Roman historian, that he did live at the time when, and the place where, his disciples say he did. In addition to this authentic history, we have the Lord's Supper, instituted by him during his lifetime, and kept up ever since in

remembrance of him. For if it was not instituted by Christ at the time specified, but was set up by an impostor afterwards, then his vigilant enemies had certainly exposed the fraud. The reason they did not assail him at this point was that there were too many witnesses against them; and though his disciples in like manner recorded the raising of Lazarus from the dead, still they did not dispute it, for the same reason. And though they further recorded that the sun refused to shine for three hours at the crucifixion of Christ, and the earth shook, and the rocks rent, these facts were too well known for refutation, and stand without a reply from his vigilant and malicious enemies. It is clear, then, that Christ lived when and where it is said that he lived.

II. Did he die? That he died by crucifixion on a cross is a fact that has never been assailed by his most bitter enemies. But was he really dead? This also is an important point in the case; and when we remember the care that is taken in the New Testament to establish the fact that he was dead, we are surprised that this fact has not had a more prominent place in the investigation of this subject; as he died of his own free will and accord before the violence of the cross had time to kill him. It is stated that when those who broke the legs of the thieves crucified with him "came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs," but reported the fact to Pilate. He was very much surprised when he heard that Jesus was already dead, and, as there was a tremendous interest felt with regard to this extraordinary personage, he ordered a strict examination for the purpose of ascertaining whether

or not he was really dead. Under this examination, one of the soldiers, to put the fact to the most severe test possible, thrust a spear into his side, and, no signs of life appearing, all parties are satisfied that he is dead.

III. Did he rise from the dead? With regard to this fact there are two classes of evidence, one for and the other against his resurrection. We propose to notice both of these, and, if possible, give them the credit they deserve, comparing them together as we go along.

The Jewish Scriptures had abundantly foretold the resurrection of the promised Messiah. Provided he were the true Messiah, he would therefore rise from the dead; and Christ himself had foretold his own resurrection; all which put his enemies on the alert with regard to that point. To prevent any fraud with regard to it, they stationed the regular guard of Roman soldiers around the sepulchre, placed a great stone at the mouth of it, with the Roman seal, to break which was death by the law. The stone itself must have been very large; for early on the third morning, as the women repaired to the sepulchre, they inquired, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" seeming to know that they were not able to do it. With all these safeguards set up by his enemies, it certainly appears that there could be no fraud in the matter; and yet, somehow or other, on the third morning the stone is rolled away, and the body of Jesus missing. This fact is acknowledged by all parties; but how it took place, was the great subject of inquiry on that momentous morning—than which the sun, in his long career, never shone on one of greater moment. The disci-

ples record that an angel descended from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat upon it, before whom the guards fell as dead men; and that Christ rose from the dead of his own accord. The panic-stricken guards, however, as soon as they recovered from the shock, ran off to the authorities, and very probably told the facts as they occurred. Those authorities, knowing that his resurrection was death to their cause, and having but little time in which to make up a story, as all was at stake upon the events of that morning, the disciples being expected to be very early at the sepulchre, the best they could do in this emergency was, as the disciples tell us, to bribe those soldiers with money to tell that his disciples stole him away while they slept; and if this came to the governor's ears, they would persuade him, and secure them from the penalty of death for being asleep at their post. It seems that the guard had so much confidence in the corruption of the governor, as to risk their lives upon the occasion for the money offered. But let us examine their evidence a little. In the first place, how could the disciples know that the guard, consisting of sixty men, were all sound asleep? Only two days before, when their Master was arrested, they had shown a great deal of timidity and cowardice; and now, sad and dispirited as they were, and supposing, as they did, that their hopes were buried with him, is it probable that they would venture upon a guard of sixty men, under sentence of death if they fell asleep, near enough to ascertain the fact that they were all asleep at the same time? And then, is it probable that every one of these sixty soldiers would fall asleep at his post, knowing, as

they did, that death would be the penalty if they did so? But, admitting that the guard did fall asleep, and that the diseiples stole away the body of Jesus while they thus slept, how eould they testify further than that when they awoke he was gone? He may have arisen, so far as they eould know, when they were asleep. What eourt of justiee would reeeive the testimony of a man, when he admitted the faet to whieh he testified to have oeeurred while he was asleep? Sueh is the lameness of this testimony, that, though the apostles were often tried for preaehing the resurreetion of Christ, and as eonstantly urged before their judges that they must obey God rather than man, this offset to the resurreetion was never mentioned in those trials after that morning. Indeed, it was so lame that the authorities themselves were afterwards ashamed of it. And yet, for the moment they had to make it in, it was the best they could do.

And now, eourteous reader, ean you believe it? This evidenee by a Roman guard, bribed to swear a lie against the resurreetion of Christ, is the only ground that infidelity has to stand upon. For it is evident that if they cannot refute the doetrine of Christ's resurreetion, that resurreetion alone forms an insurmountable barrier against them; so that, as above stated, they have nothing to stand upon but this flimsy evidenee. I think that the eharge made against Christians of being too eredulous, eomes with a very ill graee from them; and were I writing on human depravity, I eould not find a better instanee of it than the malign feelings manifested by infidels towards Christianity upon sueh trifling evidenee.

That Christ arose from the dead, it will be granted, is abundantly proved from the Scriptures. The apostle himself has ably argued the point in the chapter from which we have a text. How forcible, for instance, is his argument founded on baptism, in verse 29! For who would have the madness to suppose that the thousands who then lived, and were baptized for Christ, were baptized for the dead? If Christ had still been dead, the apostle seems to think they would not have been baptized in his name. What a strong argument, this, in favor of his resurrection! The apostle also mentions in this chapter a great number of those to whom he appeared after his resurrection; but we regard the case of Thomas as more important to the subject than any other. On the first Sabbath after his resurrection, when the disciples were assembled for worship, Christ appeared to them. But Thomas was absent, (how much do professors often miss by absence from church!) and, when informed of his appearance in their midst, declared that he would not believe it was indeed the Lord unless he put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands, and thrust his hand into his side where the spear entered. This was surely a test that would satisfy any man. On the next Sabbath Christ appeared again, and Thomas being present, he granted him the very test that he required. With an exclamation of astonishment and wonder, he acknowledged him to be his Lord. This was the last farewell to doubts in this doubting disciple; and if Gibbon himself had been present, he could not have required more. After the most skeptical of his disciples is satisfied, it is but reasonable that we should

believe; nor has it been reasonable to doubt the fact of his resurrection from that day to this.

But we have the testimony of one of his enemies—plain and positive testimony—that he arose from the dead. I allude to the author of our text. There was not a stronger enemy to Christ in the whole Jewish nation than Saul of Tarsus, who doubtless had often seen Christ before his crucifixion; and he tells us, in the eighth verse of this chapter, that he saw Christ after he had arisen from the dead. Indeed, it seems to have been necessary that he should have seen him in order to his apostleship. Such was the effect of the interview with him, that Paul forthwith commenced preaching his resurrection—mentioned that doctrine as a prominent point of his preaching at Mars Hill and elsewhere, amid the mockings of the heathen and the persecutions of the Jews—and finally died a martyr to its truth. I will not here trouble the reader with a long list of quotations from the Bible to prove the doctrine before us, since it is conceded by the enemies of the doctrine that it is abundantly proved from the Scriptures. Hence all their little sophistry is brought against the Bible itself, for bearing witness to the truth of such a doctrine. But their great opposition to it, after all, is found in the fact that the religion of Christ cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Every other religion besides will make allowance for sin, or, at least, apologize for it. No wonder, then, that a religion which gives it no quarter should meet with violent opposition among the depraved of this world.

But we have still further proof of the resurrection of

Christ. The apostle says, Phil. iii. 10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." And again, "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Here, then, you have "a cloud of witnesses," amounting to millions, who are ready to testify to the truth of his resurrection; and they, too, the most reliable for veracity of any that ever lived. Certainly a man who can, in the face of all this evidence, deliberately choose to be an unbeliever, may well expect to be damned for it; for it is said, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

And now, to conclude, I think that every man is bound to do one of two things: either, first, to embrace Christ and his religion, or, secondly, to refute the doctrine of his resurrection. He is compelled to acknowledge that those who live under the influences of Christianity, and consistent with its teachings, are good men; and unless he can fairly show it to be a cunningly devised fable, he will either embrace it, or we shall set him down as an enemy to goodness itself.

IV The expression in the text, "first-fruits of them that slept," alludes to the Jewish harvest, where the first-fruits were sacredly offered to God, and the whole crop, therefore, consecrated to him. In our text it clearly proves the final resurrection of all his people; nor they only, for the apostle says, Acts xxiv. 15, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." The translation of Enoch and Elijah is clear proof to us of the resurrection of the body; and though this doctrine could never have been thought of unless it had been revealed, it is of the utmost importance to our dying race. When we deposit our friends

in the grave, it is a souree of great eomfort to know from God, who made them, that they shall rise again. And while Christ was the first who rose from the dead, we have therein a certainty that all of Adam's raee that he represented will also rise; and that was eertainly the whole of the race, for he was our second Adam.

SERMON XXI.

THE JUDGMENT

SERMON XXI.

THE JUDGMENT.

"For the great day of his wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?"—REV. vi. 17.

THAT there will be a day of general judgment, following the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, is a doctrine held by all orthodox Christians. That our text refers to that day, is doubted by some. They say that it cannot refer to the day of judgment, on account of the tense of the text, "The great day of his wrath *is* come," whereas the judgment has not yet come. But when the author had carried himself forward, as in the chapter before us, through the various prominent events of the future, up to the time of the day of judgment, it was certainly proper that he should speak in the present tense—present with the time to which he had carried himself forward. But again, it is said that it cannot mean the day of judgment, as it is called a day of wrath; whereas the day of judgment is to be a day of final redemption, both of soul and body, to all the good of every age. The author of this opinion seems to have forgotten who it is that utters the language of the text. When

we remember that it was "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," and, in a word, all such as "hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and who said to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," it is not astonishing that they should call it a day of wrath.

It is certainly impossible to apply this text, as some have done, to the northern powers who conquered Rome; for there was nothing resembling a lamb among them. We therefore conclude that the expressions preceding the text make it only applicable to the day of judgment. And, besides, the day of judgment is called a great day elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is said, Joel ii. 11, "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" And in the thirty-first verse of the same chapter it is said: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." This passage is quoted, verbatim, by Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 20. And again, in the sixth verse of the Epistle of Jude, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." And further, in Rev. xvi. 14, it is called "the great day of God Almighty." We shall, therefore, proceed to notice the text as referring to the future judgment day.

I. The necessity of a future judgment. And.

1. Justice does not take place in this world. This is a fact that may be readily noticed by the most common observers. But if justice does not take place in this world, and justice is one of the attributes of the Deity, then it follows that he must have a future day appointed, in which it shall be strictly meted out to the children of men. There were those in the days of the apostles — Hymeneus and Philetus being given as instances—who erred from the truth, "saying that the resurrection is passed already," and consequently the day of judgment. But how often in this world, where "we see through a glass darkly," are the innocent punished and the guilty go free! This has so often happened, even in our courts of justice, as to prevent certain officers of those courts—as they have told me—from becoming Universalists. They would have embraced the doctrine, they said, but the fact stood out too plainly before them, that justice did not take place in this world. They believed that there was a righteous God who would administer justice somewhere; and as it was clear that it was not done here, it must be done hereafter. Hence the necessity of a future judgment, before whose impartial tribunal all will be properly rewarded for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil.

2. The unequal bestowment of benefits upon the children of men in this world, all alike sinful before God, requires a future adjustment of accounts. He gives one man talents superior to his fellows; and in the train of that bestowment follow high, honorable, and profitable offices, which give him a decided advantage over those who are less gifted in

this particular. He gives one man more wealth than another in this world; which furnishes him with opportunities to do more good, or more harm, than those who have not this gift. And again, he gives one man a larger share of misfortunes than another; while he who suffers these misfortunes may be, at the same time, a much better man in God's esteem than those who are free from them—as in the case of Job and his friends, Lazarus and the rich man. Now these inequalities, under the providence of that God who will do justice, call aloud for a future tribunal where that justice shall be meted out.

3. The supposition that there is no future judgment, and that all will fare alike in the world to come, destroys all motive to virtue; for it cannot, upon this supposition, be my duty to take up a cross, and restrain all my appetites, and make them subservient to the rules of holiness, when no recompense of reward is promised me, above that which is promised to the man who lives at his ease and indulges his appetites. Indeed, it would be an act of injustice to require me to deprive myself of present enjoyment, in the hope of future happiness, when I am to realize no greater happiness than the unrighteous and the disobedient. From the above facts and reasonings, we may safely infer that God has appointed a future day of judgment. Now let us look into his word, and see if we find that judgment revealed there. We find in Acts xxiv. 25, that as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, Felix trembled." Here there is revealed a future judgment. The apostle says, Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once

to die, but after this the judgment." Here also is a future judgment. Eccl. xii. 14: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." The Apostle Peter says in his second Epistle, ii. 4, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." And further, in verse 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." And also, in 2 Peter iii. 7, "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Here we have several important facts revealed: 1. That the world shall be burned with fire, (and it is certainly not burned yet,) preparatory to the day of judgment. 2. That the day of judgment is the time fixed for ungodly men to go to perdition; which precludes the possibility of their punishment taking place in this world.

II. The greatness of that day. This will appear,

1. From the vast assemblage of the occasion. The whole family of Adam, both of "quick and dead," shall appear in one vast assembly. Adam and Eve shall then, for the first time, see all their family together. Who can contemplate so vast a multitude thus associated, without being struck with the solemnity and awful grandeur of the occasion that shall bring them together? What vast preparations would be made to meet such an assembly on earth! How little is making to meet it in the heavens, on that great day for

which all other days were made! But the greatness of the day will appear,

2. From the grandeur of the scene. A mighty angel shall descend from heaven, and with one foot on the sea, and one on the earth, proclaim that time shall be no longer; while at the sound of this proclamation, seven responding thunders shall utter their voices. The world shall be in a general conflagration. Gabriel shall march forth with that dread trumpet, at the sound of which all that are in their graves shall come forth, and old ocean roll her millions to the surface—for there shall be no need of a shore. Just at this moment Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, with all the holy angels with him. See him seated on his throne of pyramidal cloud, high and lifted up above the burning earth, while before him all the nations of the earth are gathered; "and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." But the greatness of this day appears not so much from the grandeur of the scene, as from the business to be transacted on the occasion; which leads us to notice,

III. The proceedings of the judgment. These proceedings are particularly revealed in Rev. xx. 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Although this is the only passage that reveals particularly the proceedings of the judgment, yet this one is sufficient for all the purposes of mercy, where nothing appears in the

opposite direction to qualify its meaning. Here we see the dead in the order of small and great. That they will not all be of one size in the resurrection, is clearly stated; but whether size is applied morally or physically, or both, we are left to form our own opinions. I am inclined to the opinion that small and great may be here applied both in a moral and physical sense; for we are told that as "one star differeth from another star in glory, [or lustre,] so also is the resurrection of the dead;" and further, that "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever;" which clearly shows a difference of size in a moral sense. Then while some may shine as stars of the first magnitude, others may appear as one of the smallest orbs that twinkle in the heavens. As to the words small and great in a physical sense, they concern us but little. Yet the most reasonable idea is, that there is no advancement physically in the grave; and hence that our resurrection body will have the same size with which it was buried. Men have been buried both small and great, and may be expected to rise in the same order. But whether small and great in either sense, they all stand before God; and the separation, one from another, will likely take place under the proceedings here revealed. These proceedings are,

1. The books were opened. What these books allude to, we are not told; but it is likely that in the archives of heaven are exact minutes of all the deeds done in the body; for we are to be judged according to those deeds. What a solemn thought! that every act of my life is, in some way or other — it matters not to me how — recorded in heaven!

These books will doubtless bring up the faithful record of them all; while my recollection, now perfected in the light of eternity, shall compel me to acknowledge them. If all the deeds that every man has done should then stand out against him, no human being would be saved; for all have "sinned and come short of the glory of God." But another book is opened. We are expressly told that it is the book of life; elsewhere called, "the Lamb's book of life." All who have obtained the forgiveness of their sins, have their names written in this book, as a memorandum of that fact; and provided they have maintained their integrity, and so lived as that their names have not been blotted out of this book, (for God threatens to blot those out who go back into sin,) they are all placed on the right hand of the Son as sheep. Those who have not obtained that pardon, together with those who have not retained it, will be placed on the left as goats. Then the great Maker of us all, at this court of last appeal, where the decisions are to make or break us for ever, will proceed to pass solemn sentence upon the multitudes of earth thus assembled before him. He will say to those on his right hand whose names are still in the book of life: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then recounting to them all the good they had done to his cause on earth, he thus pours back into their coffers the proceeds of all their work and labor of love—he being too rich to receive any of it as an emolument to himself. In all these good services rendered, they were laying up treasure in heaven; and they now reap down the golden harvest of a toil-

spent life, in a better world. To those on his left hand, who never obtained the pardon of their sins, or obtaining that pardon did not retain it through their probationary life, he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared [not for you] for the devil and his angels." The good that they might have done to the cause of Christ will also be recounted to them. But having failed to do that good, after being amply provided for by him, they are commanded to depart—and, worst of all, with his curse upon them—into the fire that shall never be quenched. All the dark deeds they had done in the body—in secret chambers, and dark places of the earth, hid from the eyes of men—shall then be proclaimed "on the house-top," in the audience of the assembled multitude, every one of whom shall have unlimited confidence in the proclamation. The wrath of God shall then be poured forth upon them without mixture, from the cup of his indignation, for ever.

IV "Who shall be able to stand?" This interrogatory comes from the mouths of those who "hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains," from the face of the Judge; and simply means that they thought none would be able to stand; for, though uttered in the form of a question, it is one of that kind of questions that have the force of affirmation. And no wonder they thought that none would be able to stand. But, thank God! they were mistaken. All that die in infancy, whether in heathen or Christian lands, we are persuaded will be able to stand. All the heathen who lived up to the light written on their hearts, we think, will also stand. All the idiots who had not

intelligence enough to constitute them unbelievers, will stand. And, as we are shown above, all true Christians, whose names are still upon fair record in the book of life, will also stand the terrible shock of this great day.

In conclusion, permit me to exhort you all, see to it that you know that your sins are forgiven, and then live consistent with your profession till death, and you shall be sure of heaven. If the Universalist go to heaven upon his hypothesis, so will you. If the Calvinist happen to be one of the elect, and get to heaven, so will you. If any other system that might be named carry its votary safe to heaven, so will yours. And if all others miss heaven, nevertheless, you shall be sure to get there. Then, as you have but one life to live, one soul to save, and there is one way to save that soul, and that is safe if all others are wrong, I exhort you to take that safe way; especially as it will deprive you of no good thing by the way, and finally secure you a place in heaven.

SERMON XXII.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

SERMON XXII.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—MATT. xxv. 21.

IN the parable of the talents we think our Lord intended to represent the faithful life of his followers, and also their final reward in heaven. "The recompense of the reward" is that to which Moses had respect, and which, according to the Scriptures, all good men are allowed to contemplate. Indeed, in every business that engages the attention of man, it is the hope of reward which prompts him to the exertion necessary to success in that business. And it is no less so in the Christian's life of toil and labor. The hope of a reward in heaven is everywhere held out as a stimulus to assist and encourage him. It is this hope that sweetens all his toils, and beguiles the tediousness of the way. Perhaps Satan never spoke more truly than when he said of Job that he did not fear God for naught. Nay, verily; nor do we serve him for naught; for, when properly understood, it will be found that though the Christian must undergo much

labor and suffering in the service of God, yet he is better paid in this than in any other business that could possibly engage his attention; yea, I may say, infinitely better paid.

I. We will inquire, What constitutes a good and faithful servant? We cannot fail to see the importance of this inquiry, when we reflect that the lips of unerring truth will not pronounce this plaudit upon us in the audience of the assembled world, unless we are indeed good and faithful servants. We are glad, then, that the parable before us answers the question plainly and satisfactorily. That which constituted the man in the parable a good and faithful servant, was his faithfulness in the use of what his lord had given him: it follows, then, that we, in order to be good and faithful servants, must be faithful also in that which our Lord has given us. And it is clear that whatever gifts God has bestowed upon us, of which an improvement is required at our hands, must be the talents alluded to in the parable.

1. He has given us time—an invaluable treasure. For while the financier says, "Time is money," and the poet says, "Time's a treasure," we say to the Christian, time is eternal reward. But this talent was not bestowed alike upon all. To one was given five talents, to another two, and to another but one. They had different amounts of time allotted to them for their occupancy. And so it is with us: some die young, some live to be old, while others are cut off in the strength and vigor of their youthful days. Let us ask, What use are we making of this talent? Are we so spending our time as that God, who cannot lie, and in whom

all the angels have confidence, can say to us in their presence, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" If he cannot say it in truth, he will not say it at all to us; and we would do well to inquire how he would have us spend our time to his glory. Dr. Young has said:

> "Time misapplied is suicide,
> Where more than blood is spilt."

He might have added, "Where souls are lost."

2. He hath given us the means of grace, obviously for our improvement. But we are not all gifted alike in this respect. Some, even in the same neighborhood, enjoy better opportunities than others for improving these means. Many a good sister, for instance, who has a houseful of children, has very little opportunity for going to church, or even for reading her Bible and private devotions, except when all her little ones are asleep. But, fortunately for such a one, God requires an improvement of what we have, and no more. The question is, Are we faithful in using the means of grace as far as possible? And the same argument will apply as in the former case: unless we are good and faithful in the use of them, the plaudit of the text can never be ours. But it is not enough that we use those means in an external sense, so that men may think that we are good and faithful. A main point is, to be piously and spiritually devoted in the use of them: not to make an idol of means, and say we are good enough when we have employed all of them within our reach; but to look through them for the blessing of God, and to be assured that they have answered

us no good purpose, unless they have led us into the enjoyment of that blessing.

3. He hath given us intellect. This is not bestowed in the same ratio upon all, and furnishes us with opportunities for doing good or evil in proportion to the largeness of the gift, and the use we make of it. He who is highly gifted in this respect, is capable of doing almost incalculable good, or an immense amount of evil. But there are few so little gifted with intellect as not to be able to do God good service by the powers of his mind, or to exert an influence for evil on those around him. And how are we employing this talent? Who lays it out for the glory of God? Who employs his intellect in promoting the cause of God, in studying out the best methods of accomplishing good, as much as he studies how to manage his farm, his merchandise, or, it may be, his swindling shop? And can God say in truth that we are good and faithful servants, inasmuch as we have employed this gift to accomplish the purposes for which he gave it? If not, we shall fail of the reward.

4. He hath given us education—some more and some less, according to the circumstances by which we are surrounded. It has been said that "knowledge is power;" and nothing is more obvious than that the educated and accomplished wield a powerful influence in society. But alas! how often, even in our own happy country, do we see the educated forming themselves into a distinct class, and looking down with contempt upon the illiterate! Are they thus serving faithfully that God who has commanded them to have compassion on the ignorant? Should they not rather show their gratitude

to the Giver of all good for the favors they have received, by striving to instruct the ignorant, to elevate the degraded, and win the erring ones of earth back to the path of duty and peace? Each one of us exerts an influence in society precisely in accordance with that which we have received; and that influence will certainly be felt, either for good or evil, to the cause of God. Now, on which side do we cast this influence? Is it exerted to promote the glory of God, and for the good of society generally, or is it used only to serve our own selfish ends, to the injury of others? In a word, can God say to us, with reference to the influence that he gave us in society, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"

5. God has given us worldly goods—some more and some less. These also give us an influence in society; and the Scriptures furnish abundant proof that God requires us to be faithful in the use of them. Indeed, our Saviour strongly intimates that if we are not faithful in the use of this talent, we shall not have religion at all. For he says, Luke xvi. 11, "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Our Heavenly Father, knowing our selfishness and worldly-mindedness, warns us more frequently in his word of the danger of riches, and the evil of hoarding them up and becoming unfaithful in the use of them, than any other evil to which we stand exposed. Just at this point we fear that thousands will fail to be good and faithful servants. What are you doing with your riches? Are you promoting God's glory on the earth with them, so far as he requires this at

your hand? Are you seeking out the poor and the distressed, the unfortunate and the afflicted among you, in order to relieve and comfort them? Christ says, "The poor ye have always with you." And alas for the poor with us, when we give them no assistance! So far as our conduct goes, they may remain poor. Are you contributing a reasonable portion of your substance for the support of God's cause, or are you hoarding up wealth, as you suppose, for your children, though ignorant as to whether or not they will scatter it to the four winds? You are probably endeavoring to get a sufficient amount of wealth laid up, as you think, to raise them above the frowns of the world, but, as we think, to paralyze their energies and ruin them soul and body for ever. Having this wealth to lean upon, they will not exert themselves as they otherwise would do, and the consequence is, that they will never make learned or useful men; and will, very probably, never make even good men. You cannot now name a man of superior attainments in the United States whose father possessed a large amount of wealth. Your abuse of this talent is therefore doing you a serious injury in this world, and depriving you of the reward of the righteous in the next. Then let me exhort you earnestly, Be a good and faithful servant to God, in the right use of your money; feed the hungry; clothe the naked; comfort the afflicted; send the gospel abroad, promote its interests at home; have that kind of religion that makes it a luxury to do good in this way; and then it may truly be said of you, with reference to this talent also, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

II. We will notice briefly the approbation which this servant received of his lord: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Let us suppose, by way of illustration, that a man has two servants, and, wishing to take a long journey overland to California, he leaves a written statement of his will for the conduct of those servants during his absence. He also appoints an expositor to read this statement of his will and explain it to them once every week. Suppose that upon the faithful execution of this will depends the eternal destiny of those two servants. One of them, for the sake of future good to him, growing out of present faithfulness, is anxious to do his master's will, however severe the trial, and many the difficulties in his way. The result is, that he attends regularly the reading of his master's will, listens with strict attention, and not only makes it his chief study through the week, but arduously prosecutes the labor therein required. And yet, so intense is his anxiety, he often fears that he fails in his duty and does wrong. But still, he performs, to the best of his ability, that which is right in the sight of his master.

Not so with the other servant. A disposition to indolence influences him to hope that it shall be as well with him as with his fellow-servant, when his master returns, though he neglects his duty. He seldom attends the reading of his master's will; and when he does attend, pays but little attention; thinking, perhaps, that his master is a hard man, and requires impossibilities at his hand—as was the case with the servant who had but one talent, in this parable. After a long time, the master returns and sends for his

servants. The one who had striven to do his master's will, comes up with trembling and anxiety; striving to read his sentence in his master's eye as he approaches. The master, already apprised of what he had done, greets him with the welcome words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." This one sentence, where eternal interests are at stake, more than repays him for all his labor and suffering. But the unfaithful servant, on the other hand, has to be dragged into the presence of his master, where he angrily complains that he is a hard man. The result is, that he is stripped of all that his master had given him, and is ordered to be cast into outer darkness, where "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

III. We will notice the final reward of the faithful servant: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." I gave thee a handbreadth of time—a very short space—in yonder world. You have occupied it faithfully, made all the improvement thereupon that I required. I will now make thee ruler over much in that particular. Thou shalt have a whole eternity of reward, when time is no more. I gave thee there a few privileges as means of grace. You occupied it faithfully: attended your meetings whenever it was possible; was found in your place in church at preaching, prayer-meetings, and class-meetings; often read your Bible with prayerful anxiety to do my will; was found faithfully engaged in your secret devotions. I will make thee ruler over many things in this respect also. Enjoy now an eternal

Sabbath at my right hand. I gave thee a small amount of intellect, in that world where you saw through a glass darkly. You have laid it all out in planning the good of my cause, and executing those plans to the best of your ability. I will now make thee ruler over much with regard to intellect. You shall now know even as you are also known. You shall now be able to scan what was before impenetrable mystery to you; and, in your increased knowledge, shall understand all the dark mystery of my special providence over you in your journey of life; and understanding, you shall admire and praise my infinite wisdom, in sending those very providences that then bore so hard upon you. I afforded you the means of an education.. You employed them with industry and application, and then all that was thus acquired you laid out for my glory: though all that you learned there was but as pebbles gathered up upon the sea-shore, while the whole ocean of the unknown spread out before you, your mind shall now, in the light of eternity, grasp in the whole of that ocean. I gave thee a small amount of worldly goods. You employed that also according to my pleasure: you helped the poor, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, administered to the afflicted, contributed to build churches, to send missionaries, to support the ministry of my word. I will make thee ruler over many things in respect to riches. Now enjoy that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. In a word, you shall now enjoy the true riches for ever. And besides making thee ruler over many things in all these particulars, "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Christ says,

"He that overcometh shall sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. It is further stated that we are to be "joint-heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17 But what finite mind can grasp the glorious thought, that whatever joy Christ has with his Father in heaven, we are to enter into, and realize with him for ever! And while we contemplate this great reward, let us remember that it is the end obtained through a few light earthly afflictions, when in all probability, if we had remained sinners, we would have suffered as much through the journey of life as those who became saints. This vast reward, then, is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. What consummate madness must that man possess who will not suffer Christ to save him! And now, in full view of the recompense of the reward, let me exhort you, Come to Christ and be saved.

THE END.